

THE

HUNDRED DAYS



MAX

PEMBERTON

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"I AM A CHILD OF THE ARMY—HOW CAN I STAY
HERE?" (p. 301).


THE HUNDRED DAYS

BY

MAX PEMBERTON

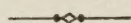
*WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
BY F. H. TOWNSEND*

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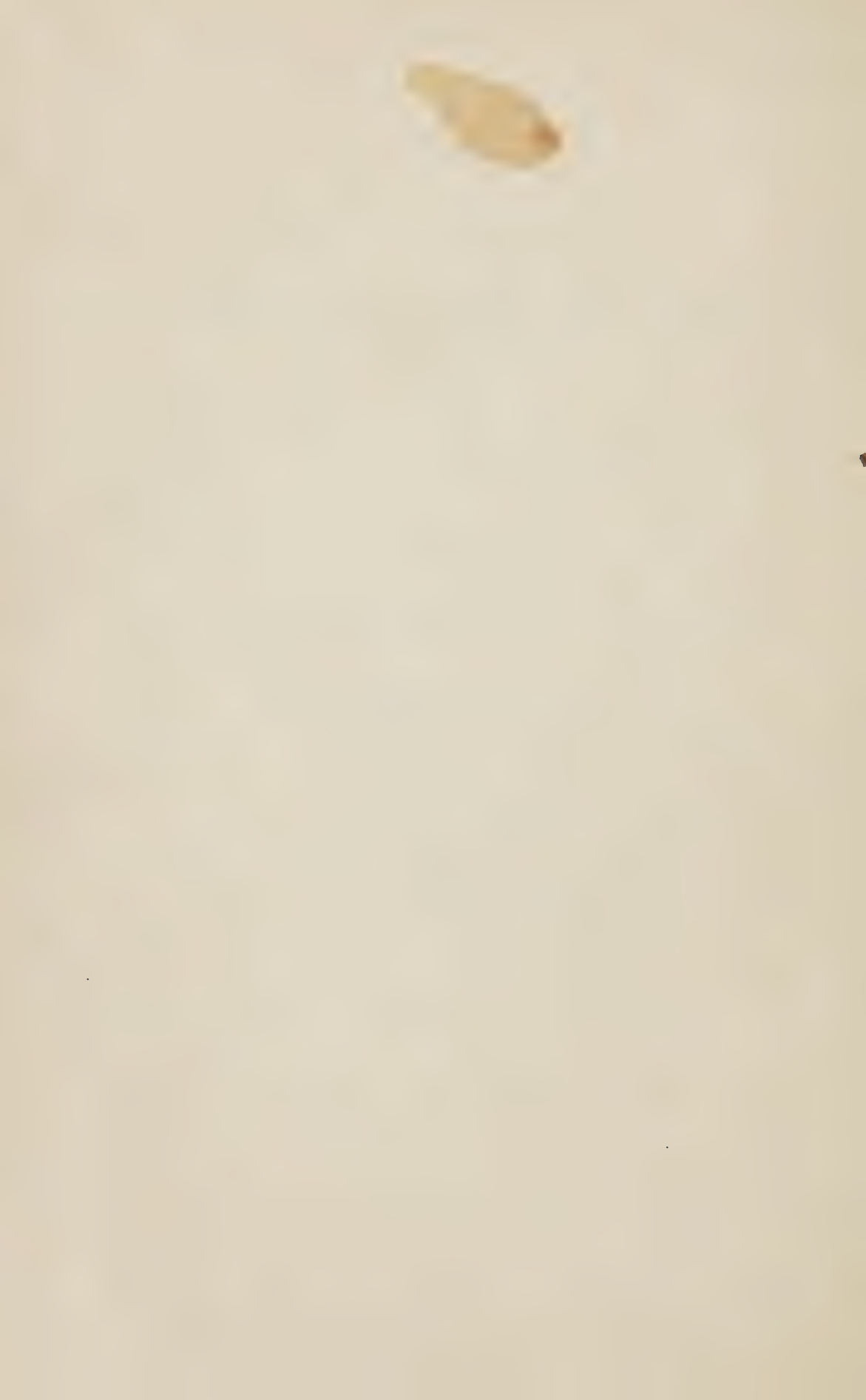
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THE HUNDRED DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

SANCTUARY.

BERNARD ST. ARMAND drew rein an instant upon the border of the wood to watch the glory of the setting sun as it dipped, a mighty arc, into the rolling waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Then he buttoned his cape tightly about his beardless chin, and turned his willing horse toward the desolate chalet which had become his home.

How still it was—how expressive of the true woodland solitude, the mossy path with the pines above him and the pines below; the green mountains for his altitudes; the molten, fiery sea for his remoter horizon.

Here a man might well lie hid from all the world until his very name were forgotten by those who had loved him best; here he might blot out the story of his life with so sure a finger that his soul should not remember a single line of it.

Bernard St. Armand believed that he had done that long years ago. Just as the gold-red sun dipped into the dark waters of the shadows, so had his past been engulfed by the tide of the months which hid him from his countrymen and blotted out the will to reckon or to remember. He cared not that the parallel should be carried no farther. The sun would shine again to-morrow, but his own life had been lived, and never more would the fever of living burn in his veins or the mocking voice of hope ring in his despairing ears. He had done with it all, he said. As night closed in upon these woodland glades, so the shadows of indifference followed in his path. He loved none, and was by none beloved. What mattered it that the day was done ?

A woodlander, going down with his healthy burden to the village of Grasse below the heights, crossed Bernard's path when he had ridden some quarter of a mile toward his home. He knew the fellow's face, and oft had changed a passing word with him ; but to-night the man threw down his faggots as the horseman approached him, and, speaking with some excitement, he called the Englishman's attention to the white road in the valley and to that which was happening thereon.

"I saw them back yonder by the torrent," he cried, without so much as a previous word of parley or any talk of when and why ; "there

were five then, and there be three now. One's the officer, as your excellency can plainly see. They held me by the throat, and asked who had gone by. When I named the priest, they beat me with their scabbards. Lord, that's a pretty tune to make a man dance ! And me that is as loud for King Louis as the Archbishop himself. If your excellency will step down, I doubt not that they will do the same for you. They asked who lived hereabout, and I told them honest men. ' There's none of your sort nearer than Antibes,' says I ; ' and if you've a stomach for the water, you'll find the Little Corporal across the seas.' Ay, God be praised, I had the last word, sure enough."

This breathless eloquence, accompanied by many gestures and not a few oaths, amused Bernard as much as it interested him. Since Napoleon Bonaparte had been a prisoner upon the Isle of Elba, over there beyond the grey shapes of Corsica where it melted into the darkening sky, the visits of soldiers to the woods about Grasse were frequent enough. Sometimes it would be a squadron of cavalry riding down through the mountains from Gap ; sometimes a regiment for the garrison at Antibes, or gunners upon their way to Nice. They passed for the most part upon the mountain roads, nor could Bernard remember the day when any one of them had paid him a visit at the chalet of

the Broken Rock, which had now become his home. Perhaps he would have welcomed them had they come ; perhaps his interest in the old woodlander's misfortunes was the hope that they might come. Be it as it may, he turned sharp eyes toward the hither valley, and instantly detected the presence of those hussars, who so little liked to hear that a priest was in their vicinity.

"What do you say ? " he asked as he looked. "They beat you because you had seen nobody ? That's trooper's logic, to be sure. Whom are they looking for, then ? What do they want here, if a priest is no good to them ? "

"The devil, their master, on a coal-black horse ! I told them as much. 'The Little Corporal would pull your ears,' says I—'tis a pity, since they're long enough already. 'I've seen none of your green coat-tails,' says I, 'and, what's more, I wouldn't tell you if I had.' That was what I said, and, God be praised, I threw a stone at them from the torrent bridge. 'Put that in your green coat-tails,' says I."

"They were looking for a man in a green coat, then. Well, he should not be a rare bird on the road to Gap. Did they name him, François—say what he was like, or anything of that ? It is not soldier's work to run after green coat-tails. I've the mind to change a word with them myself."

“Ay ; say you met François, the wood-cutter, and that he carries a stone in his hands. But I wouldn’t do it, excellency. Let sleeping dogs lie, if they must go empty awake. You’ve no green coat-tails to speak of, that I’ll venture. Let them sup at Antibes — our spoons are too short.”

“And their ears are too long—eh, François ? Well, perhaps you are right. We may even meet the green coat upon our way. Faith ! I’d give something to hear his story. There’s talk of Paris there, be sure of it. And it’s a very long time since I heard of Paris, François—a very long time indeed.”

He spoke rather to himself than to the old man, and, riding on almost in a reverie, the road carried him presently out of the wood to an open plateau, wherefrom the valley and the sea beyond it, and his own home upon a spur of the hills, were all plainly visible. Though the sun had set, a clear cold afterglow remained, in which the colours of the landscape were intensified, and every object stood out with that precision which is characteristic of the earlier moments of twilight. High above him, stratum upon stratum of rock and pine, were so many steps to the green mountains, which shut out the snow-clad ranges of the lower Alps ; below him lay a verdant valley, with a burn splashing at its heart, and open woods rising in gentle

declivities from generous meadows. The tideless sea showed him a chill and cold horizon to this open picture ; but his eyes were rather for the valley, upon whose white road three horsemen held counsel, as men who debate the way at a cross-road. Convinced that he himself was secure from observation, Bernard watched the soldiers for some minutes, during which he endeavoured to find a satisfactory reason for their presence in the hills. That they were not from the garrison at Antibes he was convinced ; nor had he heard of any cavalry in that vicinity for some weeks past. Closer observation pointed to tired horses and men who had ridden far, for one of the troopers lay upon the grass directly he had dismounted ; and, upon this, Bernard named Grenoble for their last bivouac, and a long march to little profit. Were it in pursuit of a deserter, then truly must troopers be a precious possession in the eyes of King Louis. He did not believe that it was so, and a swift imagination helping him, he bethought him of the prisoner of Elba, of the fallen Emperor—fallen, but reigning yet in the hearts of so many Frenchmen. Yes, imagination could say that these troopers and the man they hunted in the hills were here at Grasse, because Napoleon Bonaparte had been caged yonder on that desolate island. He knew not why or how it was, but he believed that premonition did not deceive him, and his

interest in the men became intense from that moment.

What kept them in the valley? Why did they halt when so short a journey would have carried them to the sea? If they were there to spy upon a messenger who would have crossed in secrecy to Elba, the harbourage of Fréjus or the Gulf of Juan clearly would be a better *rendezvous*. To this objective argument there could be but one answer. The pursued, whoever he might be, had clearly been cut off from the shore. Horsemen stood between him and the lower road. He had fled upward, pressed close by his enemies, to the shelter of the pines and the wooded heights. Believing him to be caged in a trap, the hussars permitted their winded horses to breathe. But the hunt began anew when a quarter of an hour had passed, and one of the men going round by the lower road, the other two pointed upward to Bernard's house, and set out for it upon the perilous bridle-path. They were already well upon their way when Bernard himself turned his horse from the plateau, and set off at a canter to forestall them.

He was not displeased that they should come to his house, not unwilling to hear the story. Unless it were the curé of Grasse or an officer hunting from Antibes, the months rarely brought him a visitor. These hussars, perchance, would barter

gossip from Paris, and change it for a good cigar and a flagon of Italian wine. He determined to welcome them with English hospitality, and so to gratify that curiosity their visit had awakened ; and his own road being upon the internal lines, he was at the gate of the châlet while they were still far down the valley. Then he called loudly for Patrick, his servant, and roused the old fellow from the truss of straw upon which he had been sleeping through the sunny hours. Patrick came down with blinking eyes and hands outstretched to catch the bridle-rein, just as though he had been listening all the afternoon for that very summons.

“ I was just lifting a bit of hay from the far loft,” he said, by way of explanation ; “ sure enough, I heard your honour. Will you be taking supper now, or bide a while ? ’Tis a rare old devil I am for the hearing, and that’s plain truth.”

Bernard dismounted with unwonted activity and asked Patrick if he had seen anything of the soldiers. It was quite an unnecessary question, but the old man answered it effusively :

“ Faith, ’tis a whole regiment that’s gone riding by. When I was at Coruña with Sir John——”

“ You haven’t seen a man of them, Patrick. Take Tony to the stables. I shall want you in five minutes. There are strangers on the road,

and they will be thirsty, Patrick. Do you understand it, now ? ”

“ Do I understand it, sure ? Why, it’s as plain as the wisp on the head of a monk. I come from a thirsty country, your honour.”

“ Then bustle about, man, and don’t keep me waiting. Great heaven, you’d sleep through the judgment day ! ”

“ And be wiser than some that’s waking, sir.”

He went off with a grin, while Bernard turned toward the house. It was nothing but a low, wooden châlet, set anyhow upon a plateau of the rock ; but you had a far view over land and sea from all its windows ; and, standing upon the verandah before its door, Bernard could distinguish the hussars leading their tired horses up the bridle path. They would be with him in ten minutes, he thought, and so he entered his house to make ready for them ; but scarcely had he set foot in the one room which served all his common purposes when he perceived a stranger to be there before him, and in a flash it came to him that this was the man whom the soldiers hunted.

CHAPTER II.

A PISTOL SHOT.

BERNARD shut the door quietly and stood with his back to it while he watched the sleeping man, and tried to reckon up the consequences of this encounter. Until this moment his sympathies, perhaps, had been with the men who hunted so patiently in the hills ; but they changed instantly when he beheld the victim of their pursuit ; and from desiring to help them he turned to the earnest hope of defeating them. Chivalrous almost to the point of indiscretion, it seemed to him that this outlaw from justice, whoever he was, had claimed the sanctuary of his house, and, unasked, had put him upon his honour. To this elemental instinct of an honourable man there must be added that predisposition to help the weaker of two, which a pleasant face never fails to earn. He had seen the stranger merely in that glow of light which the open door allowed to fall upon the tired head ; but the picture pleased him strangely, and he took a faggot from the fire and lighted it that he might look upon the face again.

A mere lad apparently ; at a more sober estimate a youth of two- or three-and-twenty, whose white riding-breeches were scarred with mud, and green coat of a spruce cut not a little the worse for weather. Short in stature, the stranger's hands and feet were ridiculously small, but the face was full of character, and the luxuriant chestnut hair covered an ample forehead and fringed the heavy lids which sleep had closed. Of all the features, the mouth was perhaps the most characteristic in its firm contour and promise of determination ; but the lips were a little thick and pouting, and of a deep crimson hue, and there was no evidence of physical strength in the well-rounded limbs now huddled upon an old velvet sofa. Bernard did not wake the sleeper when he lifted the faggot, nor did he linger, despite the interest of curiosity. A fugitive had come to his house, and must be saved from those who pursued him. The very helplessness of the stranger appealed to his good sense of chivalry and courage. He would save this man, though his own liberty were lost thereby.

Yet how might he save him ? The hussars would be at his door before five minutes had passed. Should the lad be awakened roughly, his very alarm might undo all. The road above the *châlet*, leading up to the heights, could be everywhere scanned by those who came up from the valley below. In the house itself there was no hiding

place which could deceive a clever eye for five minutes. Bernard, who once had been called a man of inexhaustible resource, ran over the possibilities at lightning speed, and, rejecting one plan upon the other, admitted to himself that the thousandth chance could scarcely save the stranger. He put the faggot down, and, going to the door, he discovered that the two hussars were within a hundred paces of the house. This, then, he said, was at the end of it all, unless he would match himself against the two and fight a madman's battle. The alternative was to say to the men, "Here is your prisoner ; my house gives him up ; I have no part or lot in it." He knew that he would never say that. This lad's case was his own ; he would defend him as a brother.

It was odd, certainly, that the youth slept so soundly ; but Bernard imagined that he had ridden for many hours, and, fleeing from the pursuers through the woods, had found the chalet deserted, and so thrown himself desperately upon the hospitality of its absent owner. Great fatigue might be followed by such a sleep as this, when the ears were deaf to all sounds, and insensibility could ape the face of death. Let the lad sleep on as he was sleeping now, and even the voices of his enemies would be of no concern to him—so Bernard said when he closed the door for the second time, and crossed the room with hesitating step. Should

he awake the sleeper, or find in sleep his ally? Given but an instant to come to a decision, he determined to risk all upon the throw, and to leave the rest to destiny; and so resolving, he unbuttoned his capacious cloak, and covered the motionless form with it, tenderly as a man shielding a child from pain or comforting a woman in the hour of her distress.

He covered the lad up, and wheeling the sofa a little way back that it might stand farther from the fireside, he lighted a single candle upon the mantelshelf, and had scarcely set it in the stick when a loud beating upon the outer door signalled the arrival of the horsemen, whom he answered without delay. Suspicion could not have failed to wait upon hesitation; and hazardous as it all was, and dangerous beyond any power of words, Bernard perceived that nothing but a cool head and a well-controlled tongue would serve him with the soldiers; and so he faced them with all the nonchalance he could command, and tried rather to express pleasure than surprise in the greeting he offered them.

“Messieurs, I saw you upon the lower road, but I was not looking for this honour,” he said, as he met them face to face upon the threshold. “Let me first see to your horses—the stables are by here. You will hardly be going farther to-night.”

The men laughed, and spoke together in an

undertone. One of them, a spruce, upright man, with sandy whiskers, lifted his busby and wiped the glistening drops from a wet brow ; the other peered steadily into the room, as though to see beyond the poor aureole of light which the candle described. Both were smothered in mud, and their horses were splashed to the very saddle bags ; but they were not to be tempted by the mere offer of rest, and they stated their business very frankly.

“ We are riding to Antibes on a Government affair, and cannot delay,” the officer said. “ To be quite plain, we are after a man who left Grenoble yesterday morning with some of the King’s papers in his pockets. He has been traced to the cross roads yonder, and then lost in the woods. We thought that he might have paid you a visit.”

Bernard laughed, as though he quite failed to see the curious side of it. He did not know until that moment what an excellent actor he was.

“ Upon my life, I should have been right glad to see him if he had come,” he said ; and added, still laughing, “ You may imagine that a stranger is somewhat of a novelty in this part of the world. Of course, I should have known nothing. Let us hear more about it over a glass of wine. My man will look after your horses.”

He caught the reins in his hand, and walking briskly toward the rambling stables, called as he

went to Patrick, his man, who was wide awake enough now to come running out with a great show of zeal and agility. The hussars remained upon the verandah, one of them in the very doorway of the chalet. Did the fugitive within as much as yawn in his sleep, his hour of grace would end upon the spot, Bernard said ; while for himself the suspense of it and the desire that the sanctuary should remain inviolate excited him as no moment of his life had done since the young Earl of Anandale fell before his pistol, on the grass of Hyde Park, two long years ago. Would he save this lad, or give him to what the police called justice in Paris ? That depended alike upon his own resource and the intelligence of the Irishman, his servant. For once in his life he asked both sobriety and common-sense of the ancient Patrick, and he found them in a measure beyond his expectation.

The plan came to him as he was leading the horses round to the stable, at the very moment, in fact, when he espied Patrick emerging from the yard with a great wisp of straw in his hand. Amid a confusion of ideas, one purpose remained pre-eminent, and it was this : That he must get the men away from the chalet, not at his request, but of their own will. If they went by the lower road, their return would be easy ; but if he could persuade them to cross the trestle-bridge upon the

hill path, then he might count upon good hours before they discovered the house again, if discover it they could. To send them out upon the high bridle path might be no easy task ; he could tell no fairy tale, nor lose the precious minutes in a long recital. They must go at once, swiftly, and of their own volition. This much he understood, but it was not until he perceived old Patrick at the stable gate that the method of it occurred to him ; and then it came in a flash, as a picture cast out upon a panel of the darkness. Patrick must be his ally ; Patrick must summon the men to the hills. He wondered that he had not thought of it before. Patrick was the very man.

A few whispered words to the loquacious Irishman, a meaning glance between master and man, and Bernard was back again upon the verandah, reassuring his far from welcome guests.

“Dismiss all anxiety about your horses,” he said, holding the door open for them to enter ; “my man is an old cavalry trooper, and knows perfectly well what to do. When you have had a glass of wine, we will go round and see that he is not disgracing himself. As you may imagine, he is a little out of practice in a place like this. But I daresay,” he added, “we can make you comfortable.”

The officer, who introduced himself by the name of Delajean, protested against the idea that

comfort was their quest, but he cast a wistful eye at the fire of logs burning pleasantly in the grate, and the Bohemian nature of the Englishman's retreat evidently interested him.

"You are an artist, I can see," he exclaimed as he entered. "I envy you your seclusion. After all, there is a great deal too much noise in the world, monsieur, and silence is the food of art. We soldiers are not permitted to know its meaning, but you will hardly make the same complaint."

"I make none," said Bernard, with a smile; "and, as a soldier, I have some right to speak."

"You have served, then, monsieur?"

"Five years with the artillery—long enough to tire of a false vocation. As you say, solitude is the better thing, if you know how to use it. I make war upon paper here, and no one is injured. Let me give you a glass of Italian wine, since Italy, after all, is the artist's Mecca. It comes from Capri—you will not quarrel with the dominion."

It was a sly reference to the prisoner at Elba, and in its way a question. The loyalty of the Hussars of the Guard needed some emphasis in these troublesome times; but, in truth, Bernard paid little attention either to his own words or to the response they elicited. That these soldiers should stand almost within arm's length of the man they had hunted for thirty hours and more,

should stand there without a shred of suspicion, and that the lad, covered only by a black cloak, should sleep through the interview, appeared to him as the most amazing circumstance within his knowledge.

To say that it excited him is scarcely to denote the almost personal interest he now felt in the stranger's safety or the determined conviction that the sanctuary of his house should not be abused. A man of fine physique, he had measured himself already in his mind against the unsuspecting soldiers who drank his wine so affably and lisped flippantly of men and things. Yet he trusted still to stratagem, and his eye was scarcely ever away from the bundle on the sofa, whence one cry, one word, would undo all. When he thought that he detected a movement beneath the cloak he stood rigid and motionless, and the words faltered upon his lips. The lad was awake, then ; he was listening to their talk. And there were loaded pistols in the drawer of the writing table not three paces from where he lay. Perhaps Bernard thanked the desolation of his house for the arms he had always felt it necessary to keep there. The hussars, all said and done, carried nothing but their swords. But the suspense of the moment was intolerable, and he breathed heavily as a man who must face an issue, it might be of life or death.

Delajeau, the officer, filled himself another glass

of wine, and began in an open way to speak of Napoleon. He feared nothing from the indiscretion of an Englishman, whose interest could only be that of an onlooker ; and so he spoke freely of the open murmurs in Paris against the Bourbons and their autocracy, and even ridiculed the vigilance of Talleyrand and the police, who, he said, appeared to think that a mere knowledge of what passed in the capital might be of service to the exiled Emperor and of danger to the present *régime*. Bernard listened to him with a sufficient evidence of interest to serve for courtesy, but his eyes were ever upon the cloak in the shadows, and the question upon his lips continued to be "What next ?" Did the men mean to stay, or to go on ? His excuses for the absence of his servant would scarcely suffice much longer. What was Patrick doing ? The answer came from the wood high up above his house—a pistol-shot, heard distinctly on the still evening air.

Delajeau was first out upon the verandah, but his comrade followed him closely. Darkness had almost come down upon the hills, but there remained an afterglow of grey light, and in this a flash of fire preceded a second report of a pistol, and then a loud, long cry could be heard before the stillness fell again. To the Frenchman this signal was like the view-holloa of a weary huntsman called suddenly to a supreme effort at the sight

of the game he has followed far. With hardly a word to Bernard, he raced round to the stables and called loudly for the horses. Bernard, understanding that he would not find old Patrick there, raced after him to play the ostler's part ; and as he led the horses out, he expressed a regret which was the nearest akin to pleasure of any he had ever known.

"It will be some of your comrades digging out the fox," he said quietly. "But you will return when the fun is over ?"

"To Antibes—yes," was the reply, as Delajean swung himself into his saddle. "This means much to me, monsieur. But I thank you for the will. If we return by Grasse, I will certainly pay you a call. We shall not be in so much of a hurry then."

He set spur to his horse, and with a friendly wave of his hand went clattering up the hill-path, his comrade side by side with him. They looked back once at the trestle-bridge by which the torrent must be crossed, but Bernard stood motionless upon the verandah as one who had little interest either in their going or coming.

"That man could tell us a story," Delajean said ; and his fellow answered that it would certainly concern a woman. Then they thought no more of him, but raced upward in the twilight to the wood whence the sounds had come ; and as

they went, they contemplated the good report they might make to the General at Grenoble. By them, as by every man, self-interest stalked and was worshipped. The capture of the unknown messenger meant approval and applause; and for this approval and applause the cheaper commodity "zeal" they bartered willingly.

Now, Bernard seemed to watch them indolently enough; but directly the first of the pine woods hid them from his sight he followed them up the path to the bridge, and there waiting a few moments, he presently perceived the figure of his man Patrick emerging from the thicket. Patrick had a mighty blunderbuss in his hand, and a smile upon his face which almost linked his ears; but he did not forget to lock the wooden gate which shut the chalet's grounds from the ravine, and when he handed the key to his master, he told him of what he had done.

"She was hanging on the wall in the harness room; I got the powder from your honour's hunting pouch and primed as I went up. Maybe, I thought, the gentlemen will want a little shot for themselves, seeing they're so pressed. Faith, they went racing through the wood like wild men, and devil of a green coat-tail anywhere but what's on the same back. I trust your honour is well rid of them. There's no horse in France can jump your gate, and it will take them two hours to

make the valley road and come up by it. 'Twas Providence entirely that put this bit of a cannon in my hands."

Bernard admitted that it was well done. The men had gone off upon the higher road, and the gate being shut and locked between them, some hours at least must pass before they could return to the *châlet* of the Broken Rock. It remained to wake the sleeper and to send him safely upon his way, the victim of a very miracle of simple stratagem and honest thinking. To this end, he despatched Patrick to the stables, and told him to get a horse ready. The hunted lad had clearly left his own behind him in the flight, and had come to the house on foot. Bernard said that he must ride away at nightfall and strike the mountain road to Nice, for there alone could he hope to find shelter and security.

"Go down and saddle Rupert," he said to Patrick. "I shall want him when we have supped."

"Then the gentleman's bidding to supper?"

"He will be very foolish if he does not, Patrick. Sleep and meat are the best friends for a journey, and I fancy he has a long one before him."

They were at the door by this time, and Bernard hesitated an instant, as though half afraid of the interview before him. After all, he had risked much, he, a stranger in a strange country, to befriend one whom he had never seen before and

might never see again. For aught that he knew, tidings of this affair would come ultimately to the officer in command at Grenoble and, it might be, through him to the dreaded police in Paris. What the consequences of such a circumstance would be he was unable to say ; but he reflected an instant upon the possibilities before he re-entered the house, and his face betrayed just a shadow of the question when the glow of the firelight fell upon it. Who was the man ? And what business carried him from Grenoble to the sea ? He asked himself as much, and then turned curiously to the sofa. It was empty ; the cloak had fallen to the floor ; the sleeper had vanished.

Amazed, Bernard lit the lamp above the dining table, and taking a candle in his hand he searched every nook and cranny of the old wooden house. As the stranger had come, mysteriously and without a word, so had he gone, and the night had engulfed him. Bernard knew not why he so regretted this apparent ingratitude, or would so willingly have heard the young man's story.

But, in truth, he believed that he would see him again, nor in this surmise was he mistaken.

CHAPTER III.

THE RETURN.

HE came, as Bernard believed that he would, upon a tempestuous day of March, when the heavy rains had ceased and the warm south wind echoed dismally amid the storm-tossed pines.

For nearly a week there had been a leaden sky and a persistent downpour, which set the torrents leaping and the rivers racing, and made a waterway of every high-road between Gagnes and the mountains. Then the deluge ceased, and the warm breath from the south swept the barren hills, and the sun shone out upon the sodden valley, and men began to say that the Spring had come.

Bernard rode into Nice that morning, and returned late in the afternoon with letters from England which had been long delayed. He read the most part of them in the saddle, and had news enough to bring to his handsome face that shadow of cynical gloom which crossed it so often now. A friendly agent, remitting a pittance, wrote of clamorous creditors and new distresses. From

London there came the story that the "First Gentleman in Europe" had caused the name of Bernard St. Armand to be erased from every club in which the politer arts of blackguardism were chiefly esteemed. A lavish scrawl in a woman's hand declared that the many friends of Lord Anandale were now determined to carry their vengeance to France, and that King Louis himself would become their ally. "Quit the country, I beseech you," the letter said; "go to Rome, where you will find both safety and shelter." Bernard read it with a laugh, and let it flutter idly to the ground. The day had passed when the menace of danger could affright him; life, surely, had little to offer him now, whether it were lived in the woods of the hills or the prison of Paris—and, let him admit it, he had known splendid years and had eaten the fruit of his youth to the very kernel.

A man of thirty-seven years of age, with all the physical attributes of youth still his own, one time spoken of as the cleverest officer of artillery in the service of King George III., a gambler ever, a descendant of that Count St. Armand who had come over to England in the train of the second Charles, London once had paid him homage, fawned upon him, named him for its favourite. A chance quarrel with the Regent undid in a day that which popularity had accomplished in a decade. He was

ruined by design, cast out by stratagem, insulted by the very man who should have been the first to champion his cause. And the end was as such ends must be. He fought with the young Earl of Anandale in Hyde Park upon a sunny day of spring, the last he was ever to spend in England. By his code he avenged his honour, for a man was left for dead with the morning sun shining upon his young face, and that man had been the boon companion of a prince.

Bernard was not surprised by the news he received from England, nor did the depression long endure. The story which spoke of a personal danger even in the hills of France he scoffed at, and dismissed with scarcely a thought; and as for the pittance—well, his needs were few at the *châlet* of the Broken Rock, and the money would suffice. Gloom came to him rather of the future than of the present. He had known hours of ambition even in his gaudy days of the turmoil; exile brought them back again, and with them an awakening to a bitter regret he had not thought possible among his experiences. For now he realised that the reckoning had been made, and the account of his accomplishment rendered, as it seemed, once and for ever. In no city might he expect to find redemption; the gifts of which he knew himself to be the master must perish here in the wilderness and be forgotten. He knew that despair had

robbed him even of the will to plan his own safety. Indifference went cheek by jowl with ruin, and laughed at his ambitions.

It was almost dark when he arrived at the *châlet*, and Patrick, his man, had already lighted the candles in the common room of the house, and spread a fair white cloth upon the little supper-table. Bernard could see the lights as he rode across the trestle-bridge ; and, coming nearer to the house, he perceived the glass upon the table and the roses which adorned it. Certainly old Patrick and the good woman from Grasse, who came over to cook for him, had that art of the home which a man esteems so greatly ; and it was with no little satisfaction that Bernard contemplated the preparations made to receive him and the devotion they expressed. Yet a few steps farther upon the road, and satisfaction gave place to curiosity and surprise. He perceived that the table had not been laid for one person, but for two. Patrick surely had been drinking. It was necessary to call the old rogue a third time before he came running from the kitchen to the stable gate.

“ Ye’ve company, bedad ! ” he cried, wiping a very red face upon a very red handkerchief. “ ’Tis in the parlour he’s sitting, and hungry for the mate. Sure, ’twas at sundown he came, and wouldn’t go away. Me and the cook is upside down. Will your honour walk up, or shall I

persuade him? 'Tis a bit of a man no bigger than your honour's elbow."

Bernard guessed at once that the visitor was the stranger whom he had sheltered from the hussars nearly a month ago. He had always believed that the man would return, and Patrick's announcement hardly surprised him. Handing the reins to the eager Irishman, he declared his determination to relieve Patrick of further responsibilities.

"You have done well to keep him," he said quietly. "I trust that Madame Cabot has something of a supper, Patrick. The reputation of the house is at stake."

"Let your honour rest aisy. There's soup that would run on the tongue of a bishop, to say nothing of a little divil of a fowl that I murdered with my own hands. Yon man will never hold it all. I told him you wouldn't be coming back before we saw ye. Faith, I might have talked myself silly, for all the use it was."

Bernard smiled at this honest endeavour to rid him of his guest, and, disregarding Patrick's expostulations, he returned to the house and entered his sitting-room without delay. And there he found the stranger, already at his ease, in a low armchair, which he had drawn up to the window that he might look across the valley to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

As a month ago, so now, he wore a green coat

in the fashion of certain chasseur regiments of the day; a three-cornered hat had been tossed upon a little table beside him, where lay his sword; his breeches were white, and his boots of black varnished leather almost covered his thighs. In his lap he held one of Bernard's English books, which he had been trying to read; but it was plain to be perceived that he made nothing of it. When his host entered, he turned a smiling face to him, which seemed to say, "The sham is detected." None the less, Bernard thought it a face of singular beauty; and now that the eyes were open, and the chestnut hair no longer fringed them, he discovered that they were of the purest blue, and so full of a certain shy roguery and mischief, that they compelled the instant sympathies of all who looked into them.

The stranger turned a laughing face to Bernard, and then sprang lightly to his feet, regardless of the book, which glided to the floor, or of that more reserved ceremony which would have accompanied the Englishman's greeting. Holding out both hands and speaking in rapid French, the youth expressed a fervent gratitude, and his apology for the liberty of his presence.

"I have come to tell you that which I have been saying in my heart every day since I left your house," he said. "Thank you, dear friend; thank you for saving this worthless life. As long

as she may live, Mademoiselle Yvonne will never forget. And she may be able to thank you as you cannot imagine. Yes, it is for that she has returned—to say that she remembers, and would repay.”

And thus, without any preface, Bernard came to know that his guest was a woman.

He did not know how to answer her, what response to make to her protestations, which she repeated again and again, the while she continued to press his hands in hers, and to lift the mischievous eyes so near his own that he seemed in that instant to read her very soul. The frank declaration of her sex did not greatly surprise him. He had half suspected it when he first beheld her curled up upon his sofa. The fashion of the day, which sent women forth to the army in some such disguise as Mademoiselle Yvonne adopted, prepared him for the truth. He welcomed it as one to whom the romance of life always made a sure appeal; and he said that this beautiful girl must remain some hours at least his prisoner.

“There is nothing to repay,” he said, though he did not allow her to withdraw her hand from his. “I guessed your secret, though I did not know that I guessed it. And I always said that you would come back; I felt sure of it. You will not expect me to add that I am very glad you came alone.”

She snatched her hands from his and ran again to the window, as though she feared some repetition of the dangerous hour to which he alluded. Her manner, however, forbade alarm, for, despite her evident excitement, she was the very embodiment of merry daring; and she told him at once that she had nothing to fear.

“If Delajeau is at Antibes to-night,” she said, “he will thank me to be his friend. Behold the mystery. To-morrow I may be riding side by side with him, and our destination shall be Paris. You will go with me, and your fortune is made. Yes, yes, Monsieur St. Armand; the Emperor has need of all his friends, to-night in the shadows, to-morrow in the sunlight. And you shall be one of the cleverest of them all—for I know you, I understand you as you do not understand yourself. In Paris you will remember the chalet of the Broken Rock, but it will be with gratitude. Ah! say that I am a wizard, and let them bring us supper. If you knew how hungry the mountains make me! I have ridden twelve hours, and not one crust has touched my lips. Have you the heart to keep me waiting?”

She turned to him again in such a merry, laughing mood that both his questions and his protests were alike forgotten. The story that she told, this and her mystic prophecies, he regarded as the due attributes of the *rôle* she chose to play; and yet, while at the first hazard he would have

named her an actress from Paris embroiled in some dangerous intrigue, her habit of authority, and a certain dictatorial tone she could not quite put off, compelled him to amend his judgment presently, and to say that she was a woman of rank, masquerading in the mountains as the messenger of diplomacy. In either case, mystery added a piquant suggestion to her presence in his house, and his training as a courtier forbade that the honours of it should be delayed.

“We will sup this instant,” he said, sounding a gong to call old Patrick from the kitchen. “You owe us the double honour since you paid us none last time. I admit that the haste was some excuse.”

“Excuse !” she cried, flushing suddenly at the memory. “Ah, dear God, if you had not come to me then ! Some day you shall know the story. They would have made a scapegoat of me, my dear friends in Paris ; I should be supping in the Conciergerie to-night—the prison, my friend—instead of the palace if your wit had failed me. Yes, you were clever then. We hunt the letters in the pigeon-holes, but those that lie upon the table before us we never find. I can see you now covering me with your cloak. How your hands trembled when you heard them at the door ! Yes, yes ; a fool would never have thought of that. But you were clever, and my friend.”

“I was your friend, certainly, but I disclaim the cleverness. You were the guest of my house, and the rest was obvious. But,” he added, “I certainly thought you were asleep when I entered the room.”

She laughed at the memory of the deception.

“When I came here,” she said, “I was so tired that I no longer cared. I could make no one hear, and I forgot my excuses. My horse died a mile from Grasse, and I walked from there. Have you never known the moment when everything but sleep seems a matter of indifference? I walked an hour through the woods, saying, ‘I will not go on; I will sleep.’ Then I came suddenly upon your house, and I thought that if there were a man there, he would befriend a woman. I should have told you if I could have waited. Ah, yes, it was all so well. I slept like a child on the sofa there, and when I awoke you were bending over me, and I heard voices upon the verandah. ‘If I tell him,’ I said, ‘they will hear us—it is too late now.’ Yes, I read you aright, Monsieur St. Armand. ‘This is a man who would give his life for a friend,’ I said. You would have given yours for mine that night.”

The note of deep earnestness in her voice was so unexpected that Bernard began to understand how much her flippant humour was a cloak, and how serious had been the mission which carried

her to Grasse. That she had read him aright he would admit of himself, though not to her ; and he believed that she spoke the truth when she said that he would have given his life for hers on that memorable night. Perhaps that which pleased him most was the bond of intimacy which the circumstance had created. These two, linked for a moment in a common endeavour, she to attain some purpose she had set herself, he to defend her, he knew not why or how, from her enemies, never henceforth might be as common friends, bowing to the conventions of life and rigidly obeying them. When he sat opposite to her at the supper-table, it seemed to him that she had the right to rule his house, but that her reign was in itself a condescension. She would figure in his story for a brief hour, and then pass out of it ; so much must be anticipated, since no premonition told him now of the terrible goal to which she would lead him. None the less, her presence contented him, and he was not yet ready to rail against the destiny which would contrive their separation.

“ You are giving me too much credit,” he said, desirous to talk of her and not of himself. “ A man is never able to say what he would or would not do if he were put to the test. I covered you up with a cloak, and that cannot well be called heroic. Let us sign a truce upon it, and consider the debt paid by your presence here to-night. You

may imagine that I am a man who sees few friends."

"And yet you would be grateful for friendship. My judgment tells me that. I can only read the backs of your books, Monsieur St. Armand, but they tell me of a man who has thought much and has read much ; they speak of someone who looks down upon the arena of life a little scornfully, knowing what a part he could play there ; they say that Madame Opportunity will knock at your door some day, and that you will follow her. Yes, you would laugh if I said that she had come here to-night, that she sat at your table and ate your bread and drank your good red wine, and will take you with her to-morrow. Yet it may be that. It will be that if a woman's grateful wish can make it so."

She poised her graceful head upon her clasped hands, and looked at him once more with that earnest entreaty he found so difficult to understand. What she meant by her promises, how his life could be moulded by her, what interest she had in it, no wit of his could say. But that she could compel him if she would he already admitted. Above all, she commanded his interest, and the day was distant since a woman had done that.

"If you wish it, we will play at being children," he said. "There is little enough of that in my life, Heaven knows. Once I thought I knew how to live, but a woman changed my opinion. This

house tells you my circumstances. I have my books and my pictures, decent horses, and a faithful dog. When I am tired of hunting in the hills, I go to sleep over the books which have made humanity think. It is so easy to rule the world from a philosopher's arm-chair. We contemplate kingdoms through our half-closed eyes, and build our thrones of dreams. I have governed half Europe since I came to Grasse—that armchair is my council chamber. If I believe that I could do greater things than other men—well, there are a good many dreamers who think the same. Our ambitions cost us nothing if we do not attempt to realise them. It is only when we do that we go—shall we say?—to Elba, and leave a Prince de Benevent to write our epitaphs.”

He filled himself a glass of wine as he spoke and would have pledged his guest, but, chancing to look at her as he lifted his glass, a new expression upon her face arrested his attention, and he perceived that a singular change had come upon her. She smiled no more; there was a fire in the deep blue eyes which animated them to the point of wonder; her cheeks were flushed and burning; the firm chin rested upon her hands, but the lips were slightly parted, and her whole attitude was that of one arrested suddenly by a momentous word, which recalled her from the jest of words to the greater activities of life.

“To Elba—yes,” she exclaimed presently. “And when the gates of Elba are opened, what then? Shall we contemplate the kingdom through half-closed eyes? Will a throne be built of dreams? There are many indeed that build so, but the Master Builder has yet to speak. Let your Prince de Benevent write his epitaph when the day shall come; but it will not be yet, my friend. You are an Englishman, and will not believe. But I will make you as the others: you shall follow where they lead; you shall kneel when they kneel; you shall be honoured when they are honoured. I said it when your friendship helped me in this house; I say it again to-night when my friendship can put you among the greatest in France. And the time is near—it might even be this hour.”

Bernard listened as a man may listen to a woman's rhapsody, with a certain pleasure and a certain sense of patronage which could pity her folly. He perceived at once that she was one of those almost fanatical partisans whom the exiled Emperor commanded still in France; and it occurred to him that she had been recently to Elba, and was still the subject of that unmeasured worship which Napoleon never failed to command from all who bowed the knee to him. For his own part, he had always regarded the Corsican as one of the greatest figures in history. The story of his life appeared to him the most remarkable

story that had been written of man since the days of the fables. A keen soldier, his own reputation in England had been based upon Napoleon's ideals ; but none the less, it was his unalterable conviction that his star had set for ever, and that France would know him no more. If he admired Mademoiselle Yvonne for her unreasoned faith, it was because he held it to be woman's vocation to believe and to keep the faith when men had lost it.

"You are speaking of the Emperor," he said at length, unwilling that a hard word should reward her confession. "Well, there is no subject I would so willingly talk about. Here in this place you will imagine how little news comes to me. It was not until I had last month's papers from England that I read of the discontent in Paris and of Prince Talleyrand's proposal that the Emperor should be sent to the Azores. I think they are over-timid. Only a madman would propose to storm France with a few hundred grenadiers. They have an English frigate at Elba, and half a dozen French. Sir Neil Campbell is one of the shrewdest officers in the English service. What do they fear, then ? Is the man a magician, who can command a flying carpet ? We live in the year 1815, and not in the tenth century. If Napoleon were to sail from Elba to-morrow and land at Genoa or Leghorn, as he would be compelled to do, the news would

be known in Paris in three days' time. The semaphore would telegraph it. Then a hundred thousand troops would be under arms against the three or four hundred he could command. What would he gain? Certain transportation to the Azores or to the island of St. Helena, which Lord Liverpool, our English Minister, speaks of. Please don't think from this that I am merely antagonistic. He has cost my countrymen millions of money, but, honestly, there are few of them who would not name him as the greatest soldier of any age. He has lived his life, and should be content. History will certainly do him justice."

He broke off a little abruptly, conscious, perhaps, that he had unwittingly become an advocate in opposition; but the truth was that Mademoiselle Yvonne listened rather with pity than with anger. A scornful smile played about her mouth; she appeared willing that he should continue to the end, and when he was silent she waited a little as though there were something yet to add.

"And you, Monsieur St. Armand," she exclaimed presently; "were you at Elba, would you consider that your life had been lived?"

"Ah, now you come to the dreamer in the arm-chair. I have often thought of it. If all that is said of the army be true, a miracle might be possible—to the dreamer, let us say. You land your men at Nice and march straight for Paris. If the

army opens its arms to you, the Bourbons go. If the army is hostile, you are shot on the shore. In any case, your adventurer is an Emperor for a week, a month—until the armies of Europe are mobilised. Napoleon is too wise to play such a game as that. You, his advocate, know it perfectly well; and since you are his advocate, you will gratify the honest curiosity of a well-wisher. Frankly, are you not from Elba now? ”

“ I danced with General Bertrand at Princess Pauline’s ball—just a week ago to-day.”

“ And are now returning to Paris. Is it absolutely alone? ”

“ So little alone that my friends will come for me presently.”

“ The Emperor was well when you saw him? ”

“ He made no complaint.”

“ And he laughs at these stories being told of him? ”

“ He thinks of France, of the army always. They do not tell him the stories.”

“ Then he certainly is not the author of them. You will say as much in Paris when you return.”

“ No,” she said almost majestically; “ the Emperor shall tell them for himself. Yes, in Paris, from the throne. He shall tell them there.”

She sat for an instant as though spellbound

by the ardour of her own homage ; then, filling a glass to the brim, she rose and cried, almost as one inspired :

“ His Majesty the Emperor ! Come, I give you a toast. Napoleon for France and her glory—his Majesty the Emperor ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

FIGURES OF THE NIGHT.

HER enthusiasm inspired him, and he drank the toast both as a homage to another's conviction and a pledge of his own. The subtle intimacy of their meeting, the mystery of her presence, fascinated him the more from minute to minute. What was this charming woman's story? And why had she become Napoleon's messenger? If he formed an estimate of her character, it was that of a daring adventuress such as these times produced in their fecundity of opportunity. He named her for a type of the new society, yet one linked by birth to the old; he said that she could have lived in no other age than the age of revolution and its aftermath. For these days gave such children of circumstance in abundance; they were as fireflies in the night, flitting from bush to bush in the land of transitions, and often perishing at the dawn of their notoriety. They lived their brief hour merrily enough, despite the fact that their names were hardly remembered even by the men who profited by their intrigues. He did not doubt

that Mademoiselle Yvonne herself was the victim of some schemer in Paris, who trusted rather to a woman's wit than to a man's strength, and believed that her sex was his security. The fact helped him to a new sympathy for her, and he listened to her gossip of Paris and of its people with an interest of which she was fully conscious.

"When you return," she said (and she laughed at his protest though it had not been spoken), "the Emperor will be at the Tuileries and Talleyrand at Vienna. No one in Paris believes anything else now. The army does not consent to be patient. Bourbonism is an old building, propped up by strangers. Corporal Violet has only to whisper and it will fall down. Consider how wise are those who forget that the army is married, and that its wives have new clothes. Yet that is what they are doing in Paris. They are pinching the officer's ears, and pulling the noses of the officer's ladies. The Emperor reads of it and laughs. He knows that Paris is impatient; but he will name his own day. He is not so foolish as to wait for them and their opportunities. Why should he? It is a long journey to St. Helena, and the ships are few."

Bernard could acquiesce in her estimate of the folly of the Bourbons, and he told her so candidly.

"If the gossip of those who come over from Porto Ferrajo is true," he said, "the King is guilty of a breach of faith which is as foolish as it is dis-

honourable. I am told that the Emperor has not received a penny of the stipulated annuity. If that is so, the King's advisers are madmen. Whatever else Napoleon may submit to, it certainly will not be to want of money. If they had dealt generously with him, the chances are that he would have accepted the inevitable and consented to be a little monarch for the rest of his days. The want of money will surely drive him into action. Such a shrewd man as Prince Talleyrand should have been the first to see that, and to have compelled the King. That he has not done so is the best argument for their hope that a supreme act of folly will settle the matter for ever. They wish for some petty *émeute* in France which will serve them as an excuse to send the Emperor to Corsica—it may be to shoot him. His friends can only trust to his discretion—it is a poor trust in his case.”

“In yours, Monsieur St. Armand,” she interrupted shyly; “a poor trust in your case. You English have always been his enemies. But for you he would be the master of Europe to-day. And yet I sup with an Englishman, perhaps I owe my life to him, and I am going to ask him now to ride down a little way to the port of Fréjus with me. Such are the ironies. One day they will send that Englishman to my house in Paris, and he will owe his fortune to me. Do not protest

so angrily, monsieur. Tell them to get the horses ready, and we will talk of it all as we go—yes, of the supreme folly and the Master who is to be guilty of it. Are you willing to be my escort? I know that you are, for your eyes tell me so.”

She paused sharply, looking up at the old wooden clock, which was about to strike the hour of ten. This impulse to leave him came to her as suddenly as had her whim to visit him upon her road. The hours had sped pleasantly, leaving her forgetful both of time and need, and now she remembered both to her vexation.

“My servant is waiting for me at the harbour,” she said in quick explanation. “I sent him on that the boat might be ready. If you desire a passage to Elba we could go together. But you do not desire it; no, your eyes tell me so again. You are content to wait here until circumstances compel you to say that the supreme folly is the supreme wisdom. If I asked you to-night to come with me to Paris, you would refuse me. Do not deny it. An English face conceals much from a man, but little from a woman. I forgive your ingratitude, and remain grateful. Some day you may not be sorry that you harboured Yvonne de Feyrolles, and that she called you her friend.”

“I shall never be sorry,” he said quietly, though the name astonished him; “neither am I indifferent. Ask me to come to Paris and prove it.”

"When the time comes," she said, with a glance from her deep blue eyes he could not mistake. "And the time is soon," she added, with a laugh which seemed to deny her momentary earnestness. Before he could answer her she stood out upon the verandah calling to old Patrick for the horses.

"Your servant is a droll," she said when Bernard followed her, amazed at her vacillation. "He gave me a queen's welcome, and spoke of the excellent inns at Fréjus. I do not think that he likes the hussars or the ladies they run after. Ah, my friend, what mischief we bring to happy homes, and how impatient we are to get out of them sometimes !"

"There is no need for impatience to-night. Here is old Patrick, and there are the horses."

"You are coming with me to Fréjus, then ?"

"Where you lead I follow. When I turn back, accuse me."

"But I lead you to destruction."

"So be it, if the stars shine upon us."

"It will be cold upon the sea," she said.

"Courage does not ask for a harbour," he replied.

They were as children enjoying the jest, and they spoke and answered as two that had no meaning of their words. In plain truth, Bernard continued to repeat her name as the last he would

have expected to hear at the châlet of the Broken Rock. Yvonne de Feyrolles—was she not the daughter of the dead Duc de Feyrolles, who had died in Vienna, resolute to the last in his fidelity to the Bourbons? How came she, then, in the Corsican's camp? What strange play of circumstance had won her adherence? If he had lived more in the world of events he would have known that Yvonne's name had been a great name in Paris these two years or more; the name of a child of strange fortunes and many rôles; now caught up by the social eddies, now cast out again to the swift waters of love and intrigue. But his days had been spent amid the pines of Grasse. He knew only that her father had been Napoleon's bitterest foe, and had consummated the ruin of her house thereby. And so the wonder of her presence at the châlet went with him as he rode, and in his heart he could already say that he cared not whither she might lead him.

She was going to the harbour of Fréjus, so much she had declared; and thence by ship to Elba and the Emperor. Her promise, and the mystic saying that the day must be soon, did not seem so fantastic to Bernard as it might have done to those who lived at a remoter distance from the Mediterranean shore. Almost from day to day during the last two months, grenadiers from Napoleon's little army had landed at one or other

of the Riviera ports and made their way northward to Grenoble or Lyons, or westward to Marseilles. Wherever these men had passed they left behind them the Emperor's fervid proclamations, and the seed of their own enthusiasm. The watchfulness of the garrison at Antibes, the frequent passing of messengers from Grenoble to the coast, permitted even the ignorant to know that authority did not sleep upon an easy bed, and that vigilance was the watchword. Yet withal, it is to be doubted if a hundred men in all France believed that this unrest and apprehension could by any means be turned to Napoleon's profit. Let him land, they said, and he would be shot a hundred yards from the shore. His pitiful army, but a few hundreds at the most, might follow him ardently, but it would be to certain destruction. Some doubted if any overt act would be attempted; the exiled Emperor might prick the fears of the Bourbon King to fill his depleted exchequer, but he would never be such a madman as to return to France. In the army there remained a latent faith which asked no questions, but believed in a day of promise, when the people themselves would recall the Emperor. Here, perhaps, were the most poignant regrets for the years which had been. Not only among the actual troops, but among the host of prisoners released from Russian and German prisons to swarm over their native land, you heard one

name, one aspiration—the exile and his glory. Paris ignored these men, and declared that the victims of such countless hardships would never take up arms again; but then, as ever, Paris slept when the hand of destiny knocked at the gate.

There was something of this in Bernard's mind when he helped Mademoiselle upon her horse, and, mounting, rode after her toward the port of Fréjus. How, he asked himself, if the armies of Napoleon did indeed come to these shores and ride by upon their way to Paris! Would the passing alter his own scheme of life? Could it be possible that Napoleon's star, which had shone upon so many lives, would shine for a brief hour even upon his? It might be. This laughing, brilliant woman of the world offered him a career in Paris—new friends and new opportunities. He did not hold it to be entirely a jest; and, carried away for the moment by the thought, he became conscious of the truth that he had neither buried ambition beneath the mountains of the south nor sacrificed his manhood upon the altar of an accident. No, indeed; the desire to live was strong within him with the strength of youth and knowledge. His failure in England, the scorn of his enemies, the pity of his friends, joined to colour that picture of his dreams which revealed a new city and a new kingdom. Let him go to Paris and all might be

won—if Napoleon willed it, if Napoleon dared the supreme, the greatest, folly of his life.

It was a dark night of March, with a heavy sky and lingering mists upon the mountain slopes. They went by the lower valley, at first upon a bridle path so narrow that no converse between them was possible. When they gained the broader track, the woods about them added to the darkness, which became so dense that even Bernard lost his instinct for locality; and almost the first word he spoke to her after they quitted the *châlet* was to tell her that he had lost the way.

“The road is crossed at the valley’s foot,” he said, peering into the black gloom to be sure that she was near him. “You have travelled it before, and will remember. The left fork goes down to Antibes; the right is for Fréjus. If we hold on we come to Cagnes; but we should pass the tavern first. Are your eyes clever enough to distinguish that? Mine do not even show me the trees.”

She forced her horse close to his and stretched out a hand, as though a little afraid of the loneliness of the place. When he had ceased to speak an unutterable silence fell, and remained so unbroken that each could hear the other breathing. A sense of danger abashed her, and she had ceased to jest at circumstance.

“I am a true coward—afraid of the dark,” she protested; and then she said, “This is the

reward of impulse. I was wrong to go to your house. Are you sure there is a tavern upon the road, Monsieur St. Armand? Is it not possible that we have passed it?"

"Quite impossible, mademoiselle; but there is nothing to be afraid of. Bring your horse close to mine—a little closer, and then we can go together. The woods break often hereabouts; we shall have some light if we press on. Now, really, were you wrong to come to me?"

"I will tell you when I can see the stars again," she said, and so, pressing quite close to him, they went side by side through the wood, and emerging upon a lighter road presently, they met, face to face, a squadron of lancers, feeling its way as they had done and in no less doubt than they had been. Soldiers were not so uncommon at Grasse that Bernard should have paid any particular attention to these men, nor would he have done so had not Mademoiselle suddenly uttered a low cry, and, reining back her horse, cried out a welcome to one of the company the earnestness of which was no less remarkable than the surprise of it.

"My God!" she cried. "It is Colonel Dupontine."

"Colonel Dupontine, as you say," came back in response from the shadows, and then a hearty voice asked her what she was doing on the road to Fréjus, and what had carried her from Paris

again. Bernard perceived in a moment that she had found a friend ; but the significance of the meeting, the momentous reality of that encounter, remained hidden to him yet a little while.

“ This is Monsieur St. Armand,” she cried, introducing him in the cavalierly fashion of the wayside. “ His house is on the height above us. I believe that he would welcome you if you went up.”

“ We go nowhere until the men are bivouacked,” the Colonel said quietly ; and then added apologetically, “ I count it lucky that you should be the first person we have met since we left Cagnes behind us. Nor will his Majesty be displeased.”

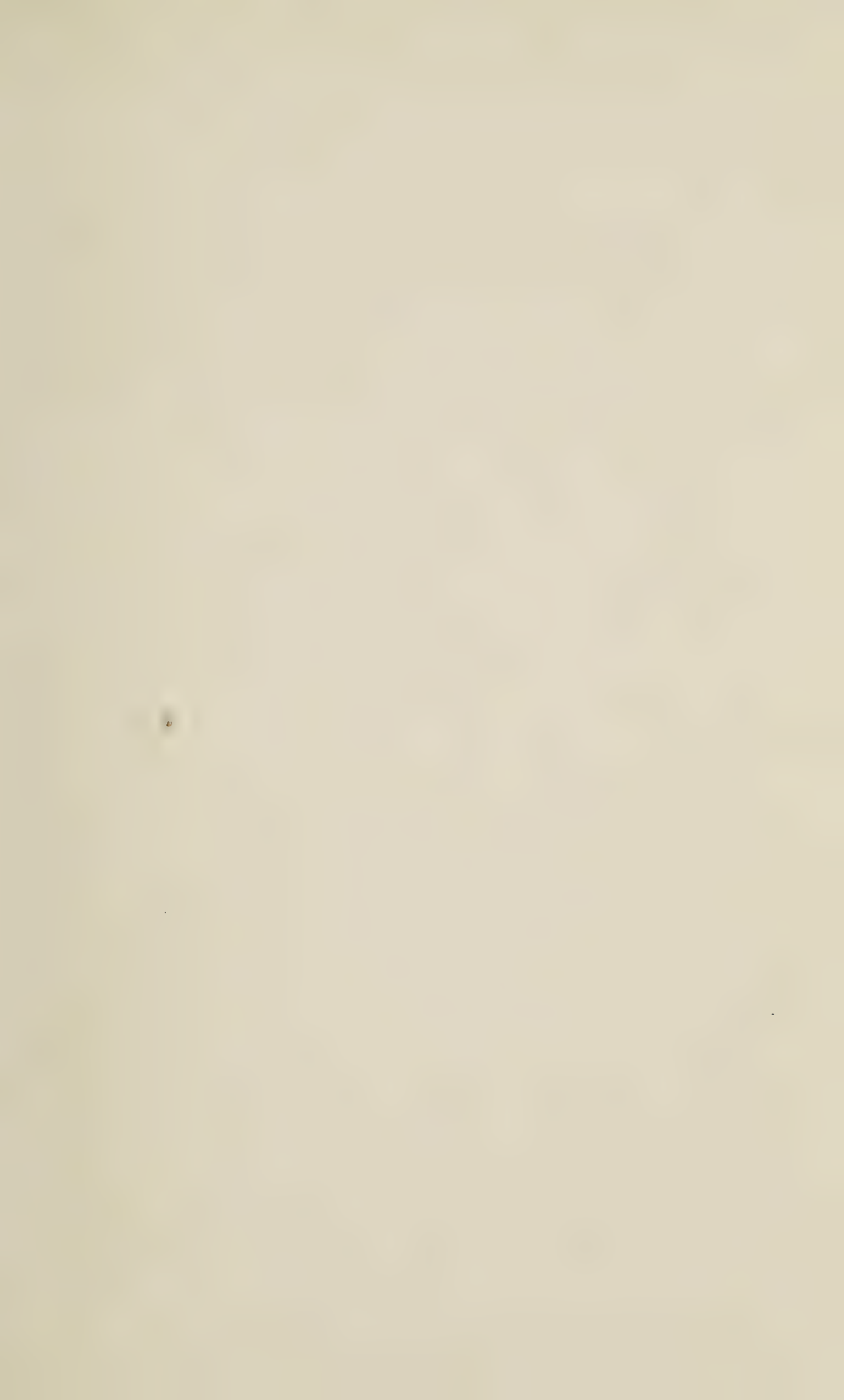
“ His Majesty ? God of Heaven ! the Emperor is not with you ? ”

“ He is some three hundred paces down the road, mademoiselle.”

He laughed at her surprise, and wheeling his horse, he turned to gaze down the long road by which he had come from Cagnes. From time to time lanterns could now be perceived dancing between the pines, and upon the open track in their midst ; while a low sound of footsteps became distinctly audible, and the figures of men emerged one by one from the darkness. At first they were little better than a motley horde, a vanguard advancing with no other purpose than that of finding a bivouac for the night ; but presently some

order might be discerned as several companies of grenadiers marched up to the place, and were followed by *chasseurs à cheval* and a number of generals on horseback. Bernard had seen something of military society in Paris when he passed through the capital upon his way from England ; but the night was far too dark for him to recognise the faces of the officers he now confronted, and their voices were not readily distinguished—unless it were the voice of General Cambronne, pleasing and entirely characteristic of that dashing soldier. At the same time it remained perfectly clear to him that Mademoiselle Yvonne was personally known to them all, and their pleasure at the encounter was no less than Colonel Dupontine's had been. They crowded round about her, expressing some surprise at the meeting, and treating her with a deferential yet unmistakable familiarity which fell ill upon Bernard's ears. It may be that he was as yet wholly incredulous as to that which happened, wholly unable to believe it, or to accept the Colonel's intimation in any other sense than that of the jest. Napoleon at Grasse ! They might as well have told him that he was at Paris. Bernard scorned the idea, and had utterly rejected it, when the Emperor himself, a general upon either side, rode up to the company and asked what the delay meant, and who had caused it.

There are hours in the life of every man, whose very minutes can almost be numbered in after years, whose episodes remain so vivid that the mind can never relinquish the most trifling detail, even the lightest word that has been spoken. Such an hour was that of this night of March, when Bernard St. Armand heard Napoleon speak upon the road to Paris, and knew that the supreme folly had come to pass, and that to-morrow all Europe would be in arms. Every instant of that scene went with him to his life's end—the vague black shapes of the woods, the shadows upon the road, the cloaked soldiers, the grim grenadiers, the horsemen muffled in their capes, the heterogeneous attendant groups of peasants, waked from their beds to hear the fateful tidings—above them, all supreme, the grey cloak and cocked hat of him who had made his children kings, and by the scorn of kings would rule again. He stood as a man in a dream before a splendid reality. It were as though a kindly darkness cloaked the mockery, permitting these men to masquerade as the troops of a conquering army, but to masquerade only when the sun did not shine, and France slept in sure security. Let the dawn come and the alarm go out; let this story be told at Grenoble or at Lyons, and what would remain to Napoleon but the open gate of exile or the greater bondage of the failure? The stoutest partisan might have





“I DO NOT FIND AN ENEMY WHO BEARS SO HONOURABLE
A NAME.”

said as much at such an hour, and Bernard was no partisan, but merely a spectator, called by the hazard of a woman's eyes to be the witness of this monstrous tragedy. And from him blank incredulity—nay, inexpressible amazement—was the only possible tribute. He could have laughed aloud for the irony of it when the Emperor, hearing his name from the woman he had befriended, signalled him out, and addressed him with almost deferential courtesy.

“Monsieur St. Armand! An Englishman! Impossible! I do not find an enemy who bears so honourable a name. Hasten to tell us that it is not so.”

“An Englishman always, Sire,” was the answer, “but one who has learned to love France, and to make his home among your people.”

“So much Mademoiselle tells me. I accept her assurances, sir. You see us at a moment when we welcome our friends, and do not readily part with them,” he added with a gesture which might have meant much or little. Bernard construed it as a doubt upon his fidelity, but before he could protest an aide-de-camp rode up at a gallop, and Napoleon gave him instant attention. For a little while the group of officers discussed with ardour the news which had come to them, speaking of a check from the garrison of Antibes and of a danger which Bernard did not understand; but so soon

as some plan of action had been decided upon, the Emperor took up the conversation at the point where he had left it, and asked the Englishman of his house and its circumstances.

“ You live in the heights here, Mademoiselle tells us. Have you any gardens, Monsieur St. Armand ? ”

“ I have an orchard, Sire—nothing more.”

“ Is it a place where my men could bivouac ? ”

“ It is an excellent position for a small force, Sire.”

“ Ha ! you speak with a soldier’s voice. Show us the orchard, that we may judge of it. We shall not occupy it long. Our engagements do not permit of delay, believe me.”

The manner scarcely conciliated a quick-tempered and somewhat cynical Englishman ; but Bernard was still too young in wonder either to retort or to withdraw. Bowing curtly, he gave rein to his horse, and began to move up the valley road with that strange company. The men about him marched with light tread, as though unconscious of any danger, and convinced already of their success ; the officers were changing jests with Mademoiselle, and though this was nothing to Bernard, a certain displeasure remained, as though he had the prior right to her notice and gratitude. When they entered the dark places of the woods the talk ceased, and one could hear little but the

heavy footsteps of the men, the sound of their quick breathing, and the mournful sighing of the wind in the new leaves above. To Bernard the cavalcade stood for some dirge-like presentment of funeral rites when the dead were yet living, and day would bring their doom. He said that any hour—nay, any minute—might bring the regiments from Grenoble upon them; he contemplated this terrible alarm resounding through France when the cry would go up “The Emperor has returned!” when the nations would flock to arms and the standards be uplifted. Ever a lover of courage, it may be that a stupendous admiration for the very madness of it remained his abiding impression. The day must end it, and to-morrow would witness its death.

With such a conviction he put himself at the head of the company, and rode up toward the house. Mademoiselle Yvonne, spurring forward to his side, seemed to remember her neglect, and offered some apology as she reminded him of the jest.

“I said that you would come to Paris with me,” she exclaimed. “It is true, and your fortune is made.”

“With you,” he answered in the spirit of her words, “with you to the world’s end, Mademoiselle.”

* * * * *

And so they rode together to the châlet, and the bivouac fires began to twinkle on the slopes

of the hills, and within the house men moved briskly, and the lights were kindled and the doors stood open, and men spoke of Paris and the morrow. And just as the call had come to them, so Bernard knew that it had come to him, and that, whatever befell, he would go northward with the adventurers to share the magic of that mighty hazard—perchance to give his life for it, as they must do.

CHAPTER V.

THE DANGER.

A SUNLESS dawn discovered the puny army awake and restless in the full consciousness that this was the momentous day.

The Emperor himself snatched a brief spell of rest on that very sofa upon which Mademoiselle Yvonne had slept when first she came to Bernard's house ; but the earliest glint of grey light upon the mountains found him awake and at his table.

He had come to conquer France with five hundred grenadiers of the guard, two hundred dragoons, a hundred Polish lancers who carried their saddles on their backs, and a few hundred Corsicans from Elba. His force numbered but eleven hundred and forty men at arms ; and against him there would be, ere the tide of a month had fully rolled, three million of his enemies, sworn not merely to victory, but to extermination of the adventurer.

Did the Little Corporal, grown so stout in the days of his leisure—did he tell himself as he paced the vineyard below the châlet on that sunless

morning—did he tell himself that defeat and death must be his lot?—or did the eternal hope blind him as it has blinded genius so often? He gave no sign to those about him. Neither doubt of his enterprise nor lack of confidence in his own ability appeared to dictate his actions.

Last night he had sent twenty-five grenadiers to the fortress of Antibes to bid it surrender. The Governor of the fortress took his men prisoners and sent a defiant message. Did Napoleon reflect that the same message coming down from the fortresses of Gap and Grenoble might quench this little flame of ardour in its very birth? If he did, his officers knew nothing of it as he paced the dewy grass and unfolded his plans. The flashing eyes alone betokened the possession of a secret which none might share.

“Cerenon to-night,” he said, “and Gap to-morrow. We should be in Grenoble in three days’ time. Proclamations will already have done their work. We shall find an army waiting for us. Look at these good fellows who are coming out to welcome us. They are not surprised that we are here. Why should they be, since France has become impatient?”

Bertrand, Cambronne, Raoul, and Jerzmanouski were the generals to whom he appealed while he directed their gaze towards a group of peasants and citizens coming from the town of Grasse to verify

the astounding news that the Emperor had crossed the sea. There were some hundreds of these people now mingling with the soldiers and questioning them ; and while none of them cried " God speed ! " their attitude was not hostile. The little army itself bivouacked about smoky fires, boiled its morning coffee, and wondered when next it would cook a meal. These men, it may be, shared the Emperor's confidence. Who in France would close the gates of his heart against the Little Corporal ? They believed it to be impossible.

If the Emperor had snatched but a brief spell of sleep at the *châlet* of the Broken Rock, Bernard, its owner had slept not at all. Giving his own room to Mademoiselle Yvonne, he wrapped himself up in a great-coat and lay a little while before the fire which old Patrick watched in his busy kitchen. But he was up and stirring long before dawn, and when the Emperor left his couch the two men met face to face upon the verandah. And there, in a few graceful words, Napoleon thanked him for his hospitality.

" Your name was in my head when I slept, Monsieur St. Armand," he said. " You served in England with Bolton's Artillery, did you not ? "

" It was so, Sire."

" And will serve in Paris with mine ? Yes, yes, I remember your story now. They do not love you in England, my friend. I understand

why you are here ; but you will be welcome in Paris. Come to the Tuileries and remind me of this. I shall not have forgotten it."

General Cambronne came up as he spoke, and the two went off in earnest talk toward the vineyard on the slopes below, leaving Bernard to those agitated thoughts with which the night had troubled him. It is true that, in the excitement of these great tidings, when he could no longer doubt that the prisoner of Elba had thrown down the glove to France and that all Europe would be in arms to-morrow, true he had then told Madame Yvonne that her goal should be his and that he would follow her whithersoever she might lead him. But the chilly air of dawn was like a douche upon his forehead, and he began to ask himself whither the road could possibly lead and why he should set out upon it. Would it be to take up arms against the country of his birth ? He knew that it would not. And what then ? A woman's eyes, a woman's promise, perhaps her reward ! He scoffed at the idea, saying that the day had yet to dawn which would make him a woman's slave. Nevertheless, when the sun came up he began to seek for a woman, and to seek for her with interest ; and when he found her he would not conceal his pleasure.

Mademoiselle Yvonne, driven out of the house by the busy officers, made her toilet, such as it was, by the aid of the burn which rippled through

Bernard's garden to the valley below. It was so much the custom then for women to follow the army in men's clothes, even women who had little object other than adventure in their disguise, that Mademoiselle Yvonne seemed in many ways a characteristic figure of this emprise ; irresponsible, fearless, and a very child of intrigue. When Bernard approached her she sprang up and began to bind her hair with deft fingers, while she laughed, it may be a little roguishly, as though quite aware that he would come to her.

"Monsieur St. Armand," she said, "who gave you permission to become my valet ?"

"Is permission necessary, Mademoiselle ? A wise man never speaks of permission when a woman is in the case."

"Then that is your opinion of Monsieur St. Armand—that he is a wise man. I wonder if he is also a generous one ?"

"Is he to continue to recite his own virtues, Mademoiselle ?"

"I hope so ; they are so rare in these days, and there is so much need of them where we are going."

"You are still determined that I shall take part in this mad business ?"

"Irrevocably determined that you shall prove the friend of Yvonne de Feyrolles, more generous than she is, and more faithful in her friendship."

“Let her condescend to name the service, and it is already done. Is this Knight of the Unknown Cause to take horse and tilt at the wind-mills; or must he, for friendship’s sake, put on folly’s cap? The daylight is not the servant of ideal heroism, Mademoiselle. You at least do not believe in that farce down yonder. With me, you are wondering how many hours it has to live.”

“I am wondering nothing of the kind, Monsieur St. Armand. I am asking myself in how many hours that army will be in Paris. You and I will be there before it, perhaps. We may be, if those friends of mine who have been seeking me so diligently these many weeks past, do not interfere. Shall I say that I am frightened of them? Not so, Monsieur St. Armand, for there will be a brave man with me as I go.”

She looked at him archly from beneath her blue eyes, and he understood, without further talk, what she required of him. And yet her manner had changed not a little during the night, from the mood of frank enthusiasm and intimacy to that of the coquette who loves a mystery and will profit by it. Bernard attributed it in some part to the presence of the Emperor’s officers and to the *rôle* she felt constrained to play before them; but his earlier idea that she was a woman whom any man might understand he abandoned readily; and it may be that he was the more attracted by

her elusive reticence than by the simple expression of gratitude with which she had thanked him for his first service to her.

“I am certainly going to Paris with you if you wish it,” he said ; “but if we are to go as comrades, I must know a little more than you are telling me. Obviously, Mademoiselle, I have no right to take part in this *coup de théâtre* which the Emperor is playing. If it succeed it will bring me face to face with my own countrymen, and if it fail, I do not see why I should be asked to pay the price of it. That is the plain logic of a dull morning. I understand you to say that you are in danger ? If that is so, I go with you until the danger no longer exists. At least, it should not prove a monotonous journey, and if Paris cannot give me employment, well, I can but return as I came.”

“Paris will make your fortune,” she said, with a hard little laugh, the meaning of which baffled him. “I told you so last night, and I repeat it now. The Emperor will not ask you to fight against your own countrymen ; he knows the English better than that. Shall I tell you that you have little chivalry, Monsieur St. Armand ? A Frenchman would not think of profit if a woman asked him to help her. You promise me your friendship and say, ‘How much shall I make out of it ?’ Now is not that very generous of you ?”

Bernard flushed, and for a moment anger at

the womanly perversion forbade him to give her a reasoned answer. He could not deny that some thought of his future attended the prospects of this journey; and yet he knew that it had not been a selfish thought, but merely a prudent survey of the possibilities. On her part, Mademoiselle Yvonne permitted him to frown upon her for an instant, and then springing up and taking both his hands in hers, she cried laughingly:

“Oh, these English! When will they learn to understand a woman’s tongue? Do I not know your generosity, Bernard St. Armand? Do not I owe my life to it? And you, who did so much for the friendless boy you found in your house, can be angry with the friendless woman who counts upon you in the hour of her need. I will not believe it. I will never say that you will leave me alone with the dangers which surround me. Your English heart forbids you to do that. I shall not ask in vain. Speak, dear friend; tell me that it is so—say that I am forgiven?”

She drew his face down until their lips almost touched, and the spell of her beauty seemed to enthrall him. Possibly he knew that she had determined to bewitch him for her own ends, to make of him a cat’s-paw in some great game of intrigue and mystery she wished to play; but however it might be, he had not the will to resist her, and his English sagacity told him that he

might quit an adventure so pleasing at any point he pleased.

"Forgiveness is the price of frankness," he said, and his lips brushed her forehead as he spoke. "What is the danger from which your French friends cannot protect you, Mademoiselle?"

"The danger which attends a woman who is loved and does not love," she answered, casting her eyes to the ground and trembling a little at the words.

Bernard might have looked for such an avowal, but he would not have believed until he heard it that his own interest could be aroused so surely.

"Is the man here?" he asked quickly. "Is he with the Emperor?"

"He is against the Emperor," she replied, still keeping her eyes upon the ground, "the Marquis de Navarren, on General MacDonald's staff at Lyons."

"Do you love him, Mademoiselle Yvonne?"

Her cheeks flushed at the bluntness of his question. When she answered it, she lingered upon the words as though a little afraid of them.

"I do not love him, Monsieur Bernard."

"Then what have you to fear from him?"

"He is the friend of my brother Pierre. I cannot expect you to understand me when I tell you how very much I am alone. My people would accept nothing from the Emperor even when they

most feared him. There never was a Feyrolles yet who was not for the King, except Yvonne, and she is an outcast because she is not. When I came to your house a month ago, Navarren rode to Grenoble and sent the hussars after me. If you had not sheltered me, perhaps I should be his wife to-day. My brother wishes me to marry him, and if the Emperor should fail, I shall do so. They can compel me then, Monsieur Bernard. I shall have no home in Paris while the King is there. There is no liberty for a woman in France when her friends have the King's ears and she has not. That is my position to-day. If the Emperor returns, they will come to me and ask me to intercede for them. Yes ; it would all be so easy then ; but you have taught me to doubt, and I fear Navarren as I never feared a man in all my life. There is hardly a day when his people do not follow me ; I wake at night and know that they are near me ; I see them in the woods when I ride by day, and I remember my brother's words—that I shall go to him dead or alive. Monsieur Bernard, will you save me from that, or do you wish that I should go ? ”

It would be impossible to describe the affected dread, the pity and appeal which characterised this clever woman's story. That much of it was false Bernard knew quite well as he listened to her ; but he accepted the substance of it as truth,

and admitted the salient fact that she had a lover and that her relatives would force her to marry him. Indeed, it might be true, as she said, that her future, so far as the Marquis de Navarren was interested in it, would be written line by line as the story of the Emperor's return was written. His victory would be her victory, while utter defeat, humiliation, and subjection must be known to her if the mad emprise were to fail. And just as there is no surer ground for a man's devotion to a woman than that upon which a rival stands, so was he himself caught up instantly in the net of her fortunes, and driven to the arena, despite the common-sense which told him how much his chivalry might cost him.

"If you fear the Marquis de Navarren," he said, reluctant to admit how greatly the name had influenced him, "why do you not put yourself under the Emperor's protection? I can imagine nothing easier. Your fortunes, you say, are bound up with his. Does he not owe you this measure of safety he could so easily command?"

"He owes me much," she replied with some bitterness; "but the Bonapartes have short memories. If you understood the Emperor as his friends understand him, you would know that the first thing he will do, when he arrives in Paris, will be to try to conciliate the Bourbons and their partisans. He has offered my brothers much to

join him ; he will offer them more when he returns ; and who am I to stand between them ? Just little Mademoiselle Yvonne, you say, just a woman devoted to her ideals, loyal and true to her friends, the servant of everyone who employs her for the Emperor's sake—ah ! and then forgotten and put to shame because she has loved so well. No ; the Emperor will not help me in Paris, Monsieur Bernard. If I am the price of his friendship with the house of Feyrolles, he will pay it before a week is run. And to you it is nothing—how should it be ?—whether I marry Navarren or another. You will make a great name in Paris, and perhaps I shall be the instrument. If you remember the Marchioness de Navarren, it will be to say, ‘I sheltered her at Grasse and let her ride on to Paris alone.’ Is it not so, Monsieur Bernard ? Are you not determined that I shall go without you ? ”

She certainly was a subtle advocate, and her musical voice, playing surely upon the emotions, fascinated Bernard if it did not wholly deceive him. In England they gave him credit for a mastery over women which had led to the best part of his misfortunes. Here, in France, it did not seem odd that a girl he had so greatly befriended should be inviting him to confidence in a medley of plain facts and pretty fictions. Whatever dangers he might encounter at the bidding of his vanity, he believed that they were less to be dreaded

than the monotony of his exile, and that daily reckoning with the dead past he would forget in Paris. Opportunity must await him, he said, and opportunity might even give him this woman's love.

"I will tell you at Grenoble, Mademoiselle Yvonne," he exclaimed, putting a sudden end to her cajolery and leading her back towards the stables of the châlet. "Yonder bugle should say that the Emperor is about to march. Let us go and pray for miracles. If your fortunes lie down yonder, we need them, believe me."

She laughed triumphantly, and linked her arm with his.

"At the Hôtel Feyrolles you shall meet Navarren!" she cried. "It is my house, and he will come there—after the miracles, Monsieur Bernard!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MARCH.

THERE had been persistent rain during the last days of February, and when the Emperor pushed on from Grasse, northwards to Grenoble, the heavy mountain roads and the quagmires his gunners met with gave but scant promise to the supreme adventure. At Grasse he had made one recruit—an old Italian who had served with him against Austria. This fellow alone among the inhabitants of a considerable town threw up his hat and cried “*Vive l'Empereur !*” His enthusiasm amused an army which never had known an hour of real anxiety since it landed at the little port of Fréjus and began its march upon Paris.

Eleven hundred and forty-one men against the millions of Europe ! The numbers rang in Bernard's ears as he looked down upon the merry winding company setting out with such good hope for the Northern towns. How pitiful—how childish it all seemed to be ! Even the four pieces of cannon were antique and worthless, though the gunners hauled them as though they had been an historic

battery. Foot soldiers but half armed, cavalry without horses, little order, no plan but that of the march, no watchword but that of "onward"; surely an onlooker's eyes might have searched every league they trod for the squadrons which should annihilate them or for that opposing army whose task must be so simple.

Was it that Paris knew nothing? Had no word gone out to Grenoble? It seemed so as the men crept round the bases of the majestic mountains, and pushed on doggedly toward their goal. What were they doing in the fortress towns, at Digne and Gap, which the Emperor must approach presently? Were they as these peasants who came to the roadside to watch Napoleon pass, mute, dumbfounded, wholly incredulous? Bernard imagined it to be so. He did not forget a white-haired old man who asked on a lonely road whence the troops had come and whither they were going.

"It is the Emperor marching to Paris," he had said. The old fellow grinned and showed a toothless mouth.

"And you be our Lord the Pope," said he.

Incredulity, yes, for a truth there was that. Though mounted men were galloping northward crying as they went that the Emperor had returned and was drawing near, few heads turned at the news, nor was any man afraid. The educated named it a brazen lie; the poor had nothing to

lose, be it King or Emperor at Paris. Yet poor and educated alike would have laughed outright could they have seen that puny army, with its few hundred grenadiers, its mud-stained cannon, its lancers without lances, and saddles without horses. Let but one good regiment march out from Grenoble, and that would be the end of it. Then why did General Marchand delay? The troopers themselves answered you that there was no regiment in France which would raise its rifles against the Emperor. Their very faith made them fearless, and no Mohammedan seeking Paradise ever set out for a campaign with a lighter heart.

Now this little army passing swiftly as might be upon the difficult road, arrived upon that evening at the hamlet of Barême, and there bivouacked with as little remembrance of its numbers or its situation as had troubled it at Grasse. Fraternising with the astonished inhabitants, the soldiers billeted themselves as far as might be upon the crazy little houses, and gathered about the inn-doors when the moon was up to tell of the wonders that awaited them in Paris, and of the rich rewards their fidelity would reap there. It is true that sentinels were posted about the Emperor's quarters; but this was rather a matter of form than of prudence, and the men slept as fearlessly as they had done in their own barracks at Elba. At dawn they were marching again, and when the sun set they

slept at Digne, and promised that to-morrow they would enter the fortress town of Gap and add the garrison to their numbers. Nor was it an idle boast. Grasse had received them in silence and awe ; but tongues were loosed as the men went northward, and if no troops came over, none opposed. They took the fort at Gap without firing a musket ; and delaying there but to spread abroad the proclamations by which the Emperor would win the people's ear, they set off upon the sixth day of March to throw down the glove to Marchand, and to decide in one supreme moment the destiny of France and her rulers.

Now to Bernard St. Armand and merry Mademoiselle Yvonne, who rode with him, this adventure had been accompanied by so little hardship, and it presented so many changing scenes, that their interest waxed with every stage upon that road of mystery and daring. A frank disbeliever at the moment of embarking, all Bernard's latent love of courage and emprise came to him as the hours went by, and told him that it might even be. Let the magic of the Emperor's name cast a new spell upon France, and the day were won and the end sure. And yet the doubt was not less nor the fascination of it absent. Many a time as the puny cavalcade wound in and out between the green mountains, Bernard expected the heights to belch forth flame and to distinguish the accoutre-

ments of the King's horse as they lay in ambush in the woods. No surprise would have astonished him. His wonder was that surprise delayed, and that those who had all to lose in these precious hours made so poor a use of them.

Had Marchand no news, then? Could it be possible that the tidings had not yet come to Marshal MacDonald at Lyons? Bernard used to ask Mademoiselle these questions as they rode side by side, sometimes in the rear of the army, more often with the vanguard as self-appointed patrols who made a jest of danger. And she would answer him with that mocking little laugh which seemed to say, "You are an unbeliever, and yet you begin to believe." On his part, he liked her raillery, and submitted willingly to the spell of her presence, as, indeed, did all those she chose to favour with her notice, from the Emperor himself to the youngest officer of Lancers ardently desiring her amorous society. The age alone could have produced a Mademoiselle Yvonne. Bernard could not imagine that any other epoch would either have begotten or tolerated her.

They were comrades of the road, as it has been said, so intimate in their associations that on the third day, when the fateful march to Grenoble began, they found themselves some miles ahead of the Emperor's army, in a narrow defile of the mountains where the woods grew thick and the

silence was intense, and no human voice spoke of the mighty drama through which France and her people were living. It was here that Mademoiselle, slighting Nature and her beauties, declared the somewhat vulgar truth that she was hungry. "And," said she, "we have food in our basket." To Bernard it mattered not whether they halted or went on. Perhaps he did not admit to himself how very much the society of this capricious girl delighted him. Their journey had been a splendid *al fresco* picnic. Pity, he thought, that such a city as Paris must end it—for ever, as common-sense would tell him.

"What a much happier place the world would be if no one ate until he was hungry," he said, following her as she led the way from the high road to the silent woods above. "Not until you spoke did I remember that I had forgotten to breakfast. That, Mademoiselle, is surely a very great compliment to you."

"And a primitive one, Monsieur Bernard. The lovelorn swain starves himself, while the married man is a glutton. Let us cry out upon marriage and pity the poets. You see what a guide and philosopher I am. This very wood sheltered me when first I rode to Grasse. There is the hut in which I spent the night. Come and share my castle with me, and see how good it is."

She led the way up a narrow path, by which

they came presently to a broken hut which once, perhaps, had been a woodlander's cottage. Here a cascade fell from glistening rocks ; the sweet note of wild birds was to be heard, and below, upon the mossy grass, a thousand flowers of the spring budded luxuriantly. Bernard had forgotten to breakfast at the village where they slept, but his saddle-bags were well packed, and a substantial basket, obtained at the inn, contained wine and bread and meat with a salad more to be prized upon that sunny day than any jewel in the Royal Treasury.

"Your castle is beyond criticism, Mademoiselle," he said, as he dismounted from his horse and tethered the willing brute to a tree near by ; "it is also undefended, I perceive. Do you really mean to say that you slept here on your way to Grasse ? "

"I mean to say it, Monsieur Bernard."

"And you were not afraid ? "

"Of whom should I be afraid ? "

"Some women would not ask that. The dark is their spectre."

"Perhaps it has been mine," she said, gaily ; but the words were hardly uttered when a strange look came into her eyes and she continued quickly : "I can imagine myself afraid, but not of the dark. There is one man I fear more than anything on earth. Some day I will tell you his name."

“And I will tell you if you have done well to be afraid of him.”

She turned it with a laugh, and sitting upon the grass before the door of her castle, they began their *al fresco* banquet, which Bernard admitted to himself was without a rival in his experience. The soft airs from the mountains, the merry music of the cascade, the wild bird's note, the silence, the perfume of flowers, the vivid green of the mature woods—what a contrast with that life he had known and once had esteemed as the due recompense of living! Here man's needs were few indeed. The gift of a woman's love he would name first among them, and looking into the merry, laughing eyes beside him, he wondered if this woman had ever loved, and what was the name of the man to whom such a fortune had come.

They were, in truth, as children playing a little apart from the greatest drama that France had ever known in all her history. Ere an hour ran, the Emperor would pass with his puny army, down there upon the difficult road to Paris. Far away in the cities, men and women were discussing his coming—some with hope, some with fear. In the capital itself, the King and his Ministers would be speaking of this day as men speak of some tremendous tragedy. Bernard could imagine the going to and fro of messengers, the rolling drums, the summons to arms, the wild excitement, and

the surpassing doubt. To-day, as yesterday, his own poor faith declared that this thing could never be, that it had begun in folly, and by folly must perish. But he no longer talked of it. The bewitching little figure at his side enchained his interest, and demanded his homage. To wait upon her, to watch her demure antics, to be sure that she was laughing as much with him as at him, to consent to be her dupe for the time being, in the hope that the days would befriend him—he would never have believed a month ago that such employment could amuse him.

Mademoiselle helped him in this pleasant task, and her pretty hands spread upon the grass the dainties over which she gloated.

“Eggs and lettuce and beetroot, and, oh! a bottle of good white wine! Monsieur Bernard, shall I tell you that you are an angel?”

“Because I feed you?”

“No; because you are a man and have a big appetite. If I had asked at the inn, they would have given me a woman’s portion. And I could eat mountains!” she said emphatically.

“Then you won’t go hungry, Mademoiselle. Gratify my curiosity a little further, and tell me why you continue to wear those clothes. I have not seen Yvonne as I should see her yet. Do you really prefer that disguise?”

“I prefer it—yes, when I am alone, Monsieur

Bernard. Every fool turns his head when a woman rides by. But they do not look at Mademoiselle Yvonne."

"And it brings no danger upon you at the inns?"

"I never stop at inns, dear friend. My taverns are the woods; my bed the grass. For ten days together I slept with no roof above my head at all. When a day of danger comes for you, imitate me, and you will betray no one."

"Then you carry great secrets?"

"I carry great secrets," she said, "and I am a woman, Monsieur Bernard."

"But you keep them faithfully, none the less."

"I keep them faithfully, because I love."

A cloud crossed his face. He did not speak for some moments—not, indeed, until her laughter awakened him, and he discovered a pair of exceedingly blue eyes looking deep into his own.

"Now," she said, "here is someone who is angry because a woman loves. Would you have her hate, Monsieur Bernard?"

"I am not the guardian of her emotions, Mademoiselle Yvonne."

"But they bring a cloud upon your face."

"I will drink a glass of wine and forget it."

"You have no glass. Oh, here's a captain of the commissariat who packs his wine without glasses."

“There are two bottles, my dear lady.”

“A declaration of hostility. This *beau sabreur* fears my lips.”

“Calumny, Mademoiselle. He will put it to shame instantly.”

She held him back with the daintiest little white hand imaginable, and springing to her feet announced her intention of going up to the cascade to show him the hut in which she had spent the night when on her way to Grasse.

“I was alone, for I had sent my servant on to Gap to prepare rooms for me,” she said; “then the storm burst, and I rode beneath the trees for shelter. It was a dreadful night, Monsieur Bernard. Ugh! I can hear the thunder now. Do they not say that one sees faces in the darkness? Well, I saw a face at the window of this very cabin. To my life’s end I shall never forget that. It was there at every flash. It seemed to devour me with its eyes. It was not like the face of any human thing I have ever known. When the thunder ceased, I listened for a voice; I thought to hear the door moving. It did not move, Monsieur Bernard, and when the light came again there was the face at the window still. I know now that it was a dream, but you cannot imagine what it cost me to live through it.”

“I can imagine it easily, my dear lady. And yet you tell me that you are not afraid to be alone.”



"SHE HELD HIM BACK WITH THE DAINTIEST LITTLE
WHITE HAND."

“With anything that is human, no. But with that—no, no! I never wish to dream again.”

“While I am with you, you certainly shall not. So this is the hut, and this—God of Heaven! what is this?”

He drew back as though he also had seen a vision, not of the night, but of the clear light of day. As for Yvonne de Feyrolles, she uttered no cry nor seemed for the moment conscious of his discovery, but running out of the hut, she fell upon her knees and buried her face in trembling hands, as though to shut the spectacle from her terrified eyes.

Now that which Bernard had discovered was the huddled figure of a man more revolting to look upon than any he had ever seen during the thirty-seven years of his eventful life. With a scarred and blotched face capped by thin red hair, which did not clothe the wounds upon a high and retreating forehead; the man had the eyes of a leopard and a nose so big and distorted that it claimed notice before any other feature of this malicious countenance. Vast in size, unwieldy in bulk, the fellow was clothed entirely in black, with a black sword hilt, a black three-cornered hat, and for the one spot of colour other than that supplied by his rubicund face, a white cockade conspicuously displayed upon his head-dress. That he had been concealed in the hut during their

al fresco meal Bernard did not doubt; nor was it a difficult hazard which would discern in him an enemy of Mademoiselle and a spy upon her acts. So far, in truth, was he from making any denial, that the door of the hut had no sooner been opened than he gave a loud cry, and drawing a heavy sword from its scabbard, he sprang upon the intruders and slashed wildly at the Englishman.

Bernard St. Armand had been one of the finest fencers in the English army, and under other circumstances, this amazing encounter might not have daunted him. But, unhappily, he was armed with the slightest of rapiers, and even before he could draw it the great blade had given him an ugly scratch in the side, and left a smarting wound. Great quickness and an instantaneous realisation of his peril alone saved him from the uttermost penalty of it; and running out upon the sward, he stood before Mademoiselle and waited for his antagonist. Thither the Man with the White Cockade came with an impetuosity and an anger which no common logic could explain. Uttering guttural sounds, low and deep, flashing temper from his hideous eyes, even a braver man than Bernard might have quailed before him. But here was one who had jested with death many a time in the England which had banished him; and when his first amazement had passed, he caught the

heavy blade upon his own, and knew that his life must be the price of one mistake.

They were unevenly matched enough, and yet the disparity was not all it at first appeared. In another place, with a cooler temper upon one side and leisure to have gauged the odds upon the other, victory might have been assigned without an undue tax upon sagacity. But here, in the glade of the woods, where the foothold was not always sure, the light dim, and the anger of the better-equipped beyond understanding, no sure prophecy would have been justified. Whatever his purpose, the unknown man had at Bernard as though time were the arbiter of success. He thrust, he cut, he slashed with an impetuosity almost ludicrous to behold. And when no blow went home, and the shining blade turned them deftly and answered with lightning-like riposte which twice brought blood upon the black jerkin, the fellow roared like a bull, and did but attack again in wilder transports. Until this time his purpose had been beyond understanding so far as the Englishman could judge it; but it stood declared now, and this not greatly to Bernard's amazement, for he perceived that the fellow was seeking to get at Mademoiselle, and that her figure prone upon the grass (for she had swooned when first she beheld him) both provoked his ferocity and served as his goal. Such an avowal of his

purpose seemed to solve the mystery of his presence. Perchance he had followed Mademoiselle from Paris, had watched her in the hut during the night of the storm, then had gone on with her to Grasse and the sea-coast, and now was following her to Paris—with what object Bernard could not so much as imagine. Were he a common abductor, his opportunities had been numerous enough, surely. He could have taken Mademoiselle twenty times upon that mountain road before she found sanctuary and a friend. This, then, was not his design.

A second thought might have named it mere surveillance or espionage of the vulgar measure which would carry an account of her doings back to Paris, and so make profit of them. Yet if this were so, why did this grotesque ferocity attend it? Plainly, he fought to come at Mademoiselle and drive the friend from her—nay, Bernard could make nothing of this; and if he thought of it at all, it was no further than the tactics of that encounter forced it upon his mind. Just as the man cast all prudence to the winds in the march toward his ends, so did Bernard determine then and there that he should not come by them.

And so this astounding declaration of a purpose found them fighting face to face; the one with guttural cries, staring eyes, and sweat upon his brow; the other with lips set, a cool front, and such a splendid agility, so subtle a wrist, so

firm a carriage, that the savage blows were but whistling in the air, and the anger of the antagonist became ironical. Let a few minutes pass now, and Napoleon's army would debouch from the woods, and at least insure fair play. Bernard remembered this as the rapier darted and the great sword crashed upon it, and the light left the weird eyes of the man before him, and a dull glare came over them. He believed that he had the measure of such a swashbuckler as this, and would kill him presently—so premature was his reckoning. For he had taken no account of the unlucky blow that might be given; and it fell upon him in that which seemed the moment of his victory.

He had lunged in sixte, and touched the Man with the White Cockade for the third time, when the misfortune befell him. Discarding the direct attack and the rules of the schools, the stranger suddenly slashed at his enemy's head with a savagery that would have settled his account for all time but for the rapier which caught it; but, in catching it, it was bent down and whipped across the forehead. So while that tremendous blow did not get home, it yet fell with force enough to send Bernard reeling backwards, and to throw him dizzy and bleeding to the ground. And surely now no gambler would have given a sou for his life, for he lay helpless, his rapier broken beneath him, and his breast exposed to the assassin's naked sword.

None realised more surely than he himself that all was lost : that mischance had overtaken him ; and that in the supreme irony he must meet death upon the roadside in a brawl whose meaning was still an enigma.

Yes, truly, he waited to feel the steel at his heart—waited wonderingly for the blow which never fell. Why did the Unknown delay ? What new impulse guided him ? The answer was written before his eyes, in the figure of the man catching at Mademoiselle's tunic and rifling it with iron hands for the papers it contained, and had held so securely. So, then, robbery was the motive, and upon robbery, flight.

The Man with the White Cockade, thrusting Mademoiselle aside, and espying the Emperor's lancers riding up the defile, had no longer an antagonist, but, taking to his heels, he fled through the wood and was quickly lost to their view.

CHAPTER VII.

GRENOBLE.

THE Lancers came upon the scene at a gallop, when they heard a woman's cry, and soon they swarmed about Mademoiselle and her English friend, and asked a hundred questions all together, as though these two would be able to give a clear account of it.

Some of them were for following the cut-purse—for such they believed the aggressor to have been—but Mademoiselle declared so earnestly that she had suffered no serious loss, and Bernard was so little able to tell any story at all, that this idea was quickly abandoned, and the belief expressed that the fellow would certainly be taken at Grenoble. For the rest, a surgeon who had driven with the company from Grasse pressed his attentions upon the Englishman, and assured him that he had got nothing more of the brawl than an ugly cut. A douche from the merry cascade above; this and the deft fingers of the good-humoured gossip left Bernard few witnesses to the unlucky blow; and when the dressing had been done to the satisfaction

of the surgeon, they returned together to find the horses and to hear of Mademoiselle. She, however, had already ridden on with Colonel Dupontine ; and whatever Bernard's astonishment might have been, he imagined that she wished to say nothing of the attack before the others, and so had found means to impose silence upon him. In her own time doubtless she would tell the story ; and for his part he could now admit that the danger of which she had spoken was very real, and that it dogged her steps even here upon a lonely road so many hundreds of miles from Paris.

The surgeon interested him from the first. A little robust man, by name Olivier, with iron-grey hair and a clean-shaven face, he had one eloquent eye and another which spoke of wars and wounds. Undoubtedly he had been pressed into the Emperor's service at Grasse ; and although he accompanied the little army with some willingness, it was rather as a man who waited to see the end of a jest than as one who believed in the sincerity of the enterprise. Lacking a confidant among the fanatical Frenchmen around him, he unbosomed himself at once to the Englishman, and spoke without reticence of his doubts.

“ If none of us gets more than a rap on the head, we are very lucky fellows,” he said. “ I never thought we should pass Gap. That's Bourbonism all over, sir. A man holds a pistol at

your head and you stop to look for your snuff-box before you draw on him. What is Marchand doing? Is he asleep with his head on a gun or flirting with a pretty woman at the Cheval Blanc? I tell you that a division of cavalry could have done for us yesterday. They sit down and laugh while all France is getting ready to cry '*Vive l'Empereur!*' That's what they always did, sir. They are doing it in Paris at this moment; while we are to immolate ourselves on the altar of fatuity, they are trusting to an army which has its drums full of cockades and its waggons full of eagles. Time would have saved them—they are losing time, sir; and so this play may go on."

"It would be a little difficult to name your true opinions," Bernard answered with a smile. "Perhaps I myself am much the same way of thinking if the truth were told. We shall go just as far as enthusiasm lets us. They tell me that Grenoble is against us. Marchand has sworn not to leave a man of us alive. If that be so, our time is short. With you I did not believe it would be so long."

Surgeon Olivier took snuff from a capacious box, and looked as wise as one whole eye would let him.

"Grenoble is impregnable, sir," he said. "Napoleon himself could not take it with ten thousand men if honest troops held it. We may sit outside

its walls and whistle for a month unless a rogue opens the gates to us. I doubt not we shall find one, and then I will give you '*Vive l'Empereur!*' with the best of them. If they do not wait for us, there will be a holocaust in these woods. I am no lover of holocausts, having a wife and young children."

"Evidently you are not greatly afraid of one," suggested Bernard.

"I am afraid of nothing on two legs or four—except a woman. Permit me to say that you do not share that exception with me. I understand why you are going to Paris, sir."

He referred to Mademoiselle, and Bernard was ready enough to hear him when he spoke of her.

"Do you find it a good reason?" he asked. Surgeon Olivier shrugged his shoulders.

"A good many men have," he remarked drily.

"A good many men——"

"I say it. A good many men are necessary to a woman who lives by her wits, sir. Clever wits, yes; but wits. What is a girl like that doing all over the country in a man's clothes? The Emperor's work, you say. She'll tell that story any day—she's told it to a score of men since she rode through Grasse a month ago. A will-o'-the-wisp, my friend. We have seen a good many of the kind in our time. Here to-day and married to-morrow, and always in love with a

man who never thinks twice about her. In this case, you have birth and breeding behind it. Her brothers are thought much of at Paris. She could marry well if she chose. But women of her kind do not choose. They are born vagrants. They would never love one man. I speak plainly to you, for I saw you at Grasse together. If you are a wise man, you will keep your head out of that hornets' nest while there is time. There is no satisfaction that I know of in dying before your day because a woman wants your help. This lady probably has five hundred enemies. Don't make them your own, unless you have had enough of life."

"And if I have had enough of it?"

"Oh, go on, by all means!"

He laughed in that hard way peculiar to him, and passing a gold snuff-box with the Imperial arms in diamonds upon the crown of it, he looked shrewdly at Bernard before he continued:

"But you have not had enough of it. A week ago—yes, perhaps. To-day—not so. There is not a man in all France who would not live for curiosity's sake to-day. We have begun a great book, sir—the greatest book that human destiny will write in our time. It is impossible to put that book down until the last page of it has been read. Be it at Grenoble or Lyons or Paris, we shall go on. I am no believer, and yet I would not turn back

for a fortune. You think with me. You are watching, as I am watching, every leaf that falls, every shadow on the path. This idle talk between us is but a make-believe. Our hearts are full of it ; we listen to every voice. When a man rides by, as that fellow yonder is riding, we believe that some momentous event is about to happen. Perhaps we are not so wrong, after all."

He drew rein, and pointed to a scarlet-coated lancer who rode upon the grass by the roadside as fast as a good horse could carry him toward the coach in which the Emperor had travelled from Grasse. The scene was picturesque enough, and although the day had hitherto been without promise, the sun now shone generously upon the eleven hundred who marched in such good content and with such stout courage. Half an hour ago these men had passed the village of Mure, and were at this time rapidly drawing near to a hamlet named Vizille. Away to the left the country fell in a gentle decline toward the valley, and skirted the great plain above which the forts of Grenoble tower. The green mountains, the shady woods, were upon their right hand, and in these woods many of the grenadiers marched, indifferent to peril, convinced of their safety, ready to give their lives for the faith that France would lift no hand against the Emperor. And by them went the lancer, with a glittering blade uplifted and flashing

accoutrements, and upon his face that crimson flush of excitement which says as plainly as possible, "I am the bearer of great news."

Rotund little Surgeon Olivier was all agog over the arrival of this messenger, and he hazarded a shrewd guess at that which had brought him there.

"Cambronne with forty lances is riding down to Vizille," he said. "This means that the troops are out from Grenoble, and that the trouble is beginning. Do you know the staff there, sir? No! Well, I am a personal friend of some of them, and I say that we shall get no farther. True there is Laboydère, but who is Laboydère when Marchand is in command? No, no; we shall get no further than Vizille, and if some of us return we shall be lucky. You have a good horse—ride on with me, and let us see what is happening. It is possible to be amused, sir, even if we have not the company of a pretty adventuress."

He set spurs to his horse, and cantered upon the grass without waiting for Bernard either to assent or decline so blunt an invitation. Perchance it did not dawn upon him that his reflections upon the character and habits of Mademoiselle fell upon ears which resented them hotly while at the same time they admitted that a measure of truth might have been spoken. Bernard, indeed, had not been unaware that the story of this bewitching girl, who rode so boldly with

Napoleon's army, might not be all that he would care to read ; and yet her very misfortunes, her independence, and her courage were the phases of it which drew him so surely upon the road to Paris. Had she been as the others, he would not have stirred one step from the châlet of the Broken Rock. He followed her because she both perplexed and fascinated him ; and while he had no brief for her defence, the slanders of a stranger were little to his liking. Nevertheless, he held his tongue and rode on submissively behind the chattering surgeon. There could be no individual moments in that hour so fateful, so wonderful in the story of a nation.

Now the lancer, who rode back to warn the Emperor of the first check his patrols had met with, was followed at a short interval by one of General Cambronne's aides-de-camp ; and this second intimation of danger did not fail to excite the troops who hitherto had mocked the word of danger and declined to hear the faint-hearts. Every man now squared himself up and began to examine the priming of his rifle. Looking back upon the white road as he went, Bernard had a vista of a long winding column of men with here and there a horseman in their midst, and far back a coach in which the Emperor rode. Bright sunshine fell upon the glistening bayonets of the grenadiers ; gay tunics, blue and green and scarlet, contrasted

with the rich background of wood and mountain, and mingled in a dazzling kaleidoscope ever changing its hues. Ahead of him, where the pass declined toward the valley, were the old-fashioned cannon with which Napoleon intended to beat down the gates of Grenoble; and about these such of the Polish Lancers as had found horses rode with showy caparison and nodding plumes. Such a heterogeneous company never, surely, set out to the subjugation of a people. Not only did the little army appear to lack the elementary equipage of a fighting force, but, in addition, it was not wholly composed of soldiers.

Civilians of all classes and all ages had been gathered to join that amazing cavalcade. Here were stout farmers, substantial merchants from Gap and Grasse, old men and boys from the villages, even sailors from the ships going riotously as men to a joust. By here and there you heard the discordant note of the Marseillaise, or the refrain of a chansonette once popular in the casinos of Paris. There was no apparent discipline, no plan either of defence or attack. Men fell out of the ranks at a whim; a carousal added its voice to the music of the woods; the army did not even ask for victory or support, so firm was the belief in the heart of every man that France waited for the Emperor, and would welcome him with her salvoes. And now in a moment came the news

of opposition and of menace, of a general who did not bend the knee to sentiment, and who would back up fidelity by cannon-balls. Little wonder that the scattered army began to ask itself questions; little wonder that men gazed after the aide-de-camp and fell to guessing his news.

Surgeon Olivier and Bernard were among the best mounted in that company, and having spared their horses until this time, they forced their way without difficulty through the press of men, and soon were with the vanguard. The road at this place dipped down toward the valley in a gentle declivity bordered by more open country, and less wooded. It was here that General Cambronne, riding with his forty lances, came suddenly upon a battalion of infantry sent out by General Marchand to oppose the ragged band of invaders—and here both Bernard and his odd companion drew rein and waited amazed to see the outcome. One volley from those rifles upon the hillside, a single musket fired, it might be in a moment of excitement, would have ended that amazing coup for ever. There they were, some seven hundred well-drilled soldiers upon one side, and upon the other but forty horsemen—fearless, it is true, smiling, but utterly at the mercy of the hazard. And now for that which seemed an intolerable spell, neither force advanced nor drew back. Men waited

with drawn breath for the crisis ; nothing under heaven, it seemed, could save the forty, and yet they held their ground. What magic was in the air that these things should be ?

“ That fellow yonder is frightened of his men, sir,” said Olivier, who had halted some fifty paces from the lancers. “ His face is telling us the tale. Look at the expression upon it ; he appears to be about to laugh, but he would much sooner cry. If he gave the command, not one of his rank and file would touch a trigger. Watch them whispering together ; they are saying that the Emperor will ride up presently. I would venture my dinner, sir, that there is not a cartridge in one of those muskets. That’s why the fellow daren’t speak, and Cambronne knows it. Now’s his time, if he’s got his wits about him. Yes, I thought so. He suggests a parley, and he’ll get it too.”

Bernard perceived that it was so. General Cambronne, hesitating for a brief moment, rode out presently toward the infantry, and addressing the Colonel in suave words, he pointed out that his Majesty the Emperor had been sent for, and would appear very shortly to answer for himself. Bloodshed would be idle, he insisted, and must not be thought of. There could be no question of resistance if the honourable Colonel differed from him—he begged, in short, for a brief armistice, and

concluded with a pretty compliment to the troops, which was not lost upon them. In turn, the Colonel declared that an armistice with a rebel was not to be thought of; but no sooner had he spoken the words than he gave an order to his men, and these, wheeling to the right-about, the battalion went off by fours to a place upon the opposite side of the valley, where the ground rose somewhat and trees afforded a natural defence. Here they were joined anon by a considerable number of troops commanded by one of the Colonels from Grenoble; and the force being considerably augmented, it withdrew ultimately to a distance of three leagues, where in an advantageous defile of the pass it barred the road to the north, and prepared for action.

“I told you that they would not fight, and I am never wrong, sir,” said Olivier triumphantly. “What they may do when there is another thousand of them I cannot pretend to know. If a man pulls a trigger by accident, we return to Grasse, sir. Have you reflected how much this means to you and me? Evidently you have not. You are like a child who runs a little way with a crowd to see the fun; you get caught up in the vortex, and are lost before you have time to realise that your home is no longer in sight. Such is our case. If this fool’s play is permitted to get as far as Paris, you and I will go with it. What will happen

to us if it does not, I will not make you uncomfortable by suggesting."

"Quite unnecessary," said Bernard, with a smile. "I am not in the habit of asking myself what are the consequences when I have the mind to gratify my curiosity. As a civilian I do not suppose that my actions concern anyone in particular. As a surgeon, however, you would certainly hang. I hope your medical knowledge teaches you that it is an easy death."

Surgeon Olivier took snuff with some violence. Doubtless he contemplated a sharp retort in which the partiality of the English for hanging the few honest men in the service of their country would have found a place; but it chanced that the carriage containing the Emperor drove up at that moment, and all eyes were turned upon it and all ears wide open. Napoleon heard Cambronne without any display of emotion; he did not really believe that the opposing infantry was hostile, and his first act was to summon Raoul, his *chef d'escadron*, and to send him forward to address a sentimental appeal to the rank and file which barred the road. Meanwhile, the officers grouped themselves about the Emperor, and directed their glasses at the wood which concealed the quasi-enemy; while the grenadiers and other horsemen and the wondering peasants and all the gregarious company flocking to the eagles, the hillside glowed as a very garden

of moving flowers, and all was bustle, animation, and that real excitement which must attend the presence of an actual peril.

Would a shot be fired? Would the troops over yonder declare for King or Emperor? Undoubtedly, did they choose, they could sweep away this orderless company as a mob is swept by a whiff of grape-shot; but would they do it? Would their loyalty stand the test? Such questions may have troubled the civilians, but certainly none of the Emperor's men was distressed by them. It was amazing to see great hulking grenadiers lying upon the grass as regardless of all discipline as though this were a picnic at Passy, and not a thing most wonderful in the story of France. Many of them had brought wine-flasks from Gap, and they drank the toast hilariously, or munched their bread, or simply blinked in the splendid sunshine as they watched the Little Corporal and waited for his victory.

"Those fellows will be dancing with us to-night," said one veteran who had fought at Jena. Another declared that Grenoble had already surrendered, and that these men brought the news.

"All France knows of it by this time," cried a third. "Was it not a month ago that Detourville and the dragoons went over with the proclamations? The writing is on the wall, com-

rades, and our friends have read it! If I were Louis to-night——”

“Hey, ho!” said another. “If you were King Louis to-night, friend, there would not be a man so drunk in all France.”

A *chasseur à cheval* still wanting a horse proved to be more of a philosopher.

“I’m as true as any man among you,” he said, “but I’d eat my bread with better appetite if I knew what Paris is doing to-day.”

“And the King is eating his with less because Paris has done it, friend. Oh, leave Paris alone. There’ll be bread and wine enough when we get there.”

They fell to telling each other what the great cities had done for them—Vienna with her pretty women, Rome with her palaces to sack, Venice with her cocottes, Moscow with a thousand horrors of the retreat; and they could speak of the wars that were to come, when a new army and a new France would face the hosts of Europe as she must face them before many weeks had passed. Such speculation and anticipation occupied them until Raoul, the *chef d’escadron*, returned to say that the infantry over yonder would not hear him, and that his appeal had fallen upon angry ears. Then all agreed that the Emperor must take the affair in hand; and when he called for his charger, which he had not mounted since they left Grasse,

their pleasure was unrestrained. From this moment even the vainest boaster in the company could understand the tragic nature of the hour ; and when the troops began to march again, many a throat cried "*Vive la France !*" many a veteran shouted "*Vive l'Empereur !*"

He was going to win his own back—from eight hundred Frenchmen sent out to oppose him. His men could see the hostile company drawn up in good order before the woods which shut Grenoble from their view. So threatening was the demeanour of this force, so resolute had its officers been, that even the fanatics with Napoleon might have hesitated to say "Go on." It may be that but one man in all Europe would have bared his breast to such a danger or have staked so much upon the hazard of a moment ; but Napoleon judged shrewdly that this was the tide in his affairs which were it not taken at the flood, would infallibly cast him out for ever from his kingdom and his country ; and, submitting all to the decree of his destiny, he mounted his charger and rode out toward the enemy.

Would they shoot him down, or would they hear him ? He was alone now, and those who would have died gladly if death could have answered the riddle were powerless to help him. Alone, indeed ; a prominent figure in the grey cloak and the three-cornered cap, the "Little Corporal" who

had brought kings to his knees, who had conquered the cities of a continent, a new Alexander whose devouring ambition had whitened the plains of Europe with the bones of his servants, but who claimed the love of the living ! Would they shoot him down ? Step by step, pregnant of fate, a figure that the whole world might have watched with bated breath, the Man of Destiny drew near his children. To him clearer, louder than to the others came the voice of the Colonel commanding his men to make ready. He did not flinch, did not hesitate. A bugle rang out. Again the voice cried " Fire ! " The Emperor did not draw back—the silence was the silence of death. And then his words, the magic of that tongue which none had ever resisted, casting upon friend and enemy alike a spell whose thrill was to be felt during the centuries :

" Soldiers, you have been told that I fear death. If there be one among you who would kill his Emperor, let him instantly plunge his bayonet into this bosom. Here I am."

Ah ! miracle of a name—of one man's genius ! The answer came as upon the tongue of tempest, a wild cry that seemed to echo every sentiment of which the human heart is capable—love, triumph, sorrow, joy : a cry which knew neither friend nor foe, but the children of France leaping to a father's knee, the children at the gates of home,

called there from the wilderness to the sanctuary they nevermore would quit.

“*Vive l'Empereur !*” Strong men were weeping now, sane men babbling like children, invader and defender embracing rapturously ; veterans of Austerlitz hailing veterans who had crossed the Beresina. And whence came the tri-coloured cockades ; in what security had the eagles been carried ? They were waved on every hand ; drums burst open disclosed the ribbons all prepared. In their penitence troopers showed their empty muskets to the Emperor, and asked him to bear witness how much harm they could have done him. The officers who would have fired upon him rode for their lives towards Grenoble, and told those they passed by that all was lost.

It was ten o'clock that night when the Emperor, his army now numbering more than two thousand men, arrived at the gates of that mighty fortress and called upon General Marchand to open to him. An hour later the citizens brought him the keys to the hotel, and the gates which Bourbonism had shut in his face were burning before his windows.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOUSE BY THE RIVER.

BERNARD had lost the rotund little surgeon in the press of the crowd, and he was much at a loss when he entered Grenoble to know where he might find a lodging ; or, what was of more immediate concern to him, where he should get news of Mademoiselle. That she had ridden into the town with some of the officers he fully understood ; but her neglect piqued him, and perhaps he was not indisposed to admit the little surgeon's philosophy of womanhood. At least she might have contrived to send him news of her ; nor could he quite satisfy himself that her slight was not intentional and in some measure due to the adventure which had befallen them that morning.

He had entered Grenoble with the lancers, but this was no advantage to him, for the whole army poured in after them ; and presently every street was alive with men demanding quarters, and others no less rapacious for food. Though it had hardly gone ten o'clock, torches flared at every corner, bonfires were lighted, candles decked the

windows, and excited inhabitants, each desiring to emphasise his loyalty above the others, roared "*Vive l'Empereur !*" incessantly. Bernard, entirely unacquainted with the inns or the people, rode distractedly up and down the chief street of the city, telling himself that he must find a bed, but in reality seeking Mademoiselle. When at length he did find her, it was her own white hand which waved to him from a house near the inn of the Three Dauphins, at which, but for the press of soldiers within it, he had been of the mind to stay.

Certainly it was not a surprising thing that the light at her window should show him her dainty figure, or that the flare of torches in the street should disclose his presence to her. He would have known her voice among a thousand, and when she called out to him, he heard her instantly, and looking up, he perceived that she beckoned him to the house but not to the main door of it. When she spoke a second time, she pointed out a narrow lane running toward the river, and bade him come to her that way.

Bernard led his horse down the lane, and tethered him to an old iron-studded door which spoke of a mediæval age and many a lusty sword which had beat upon it. A rusted bell-pull upon the right-hand side had been broken long ago ; but an unseen hand opened the door to him, and entering the house boldly, he found himself at the

foot of a broad and handsome staircase lighted by a single rushlight set upon a great bare hearth. High above him the roof of the hall terminated in a glass dome such as might have capped an astronomer's observatory, and through this there came the soft light of a clear moon, showing galleries and old doors, and the phantom-like pictures of dead cavaliers living still upon these dusty walls. Small as the house had appeared from the street, it now became evident that it was a mansion of some considerable size, and that but a wing of it overlooked the main thoroughfare of Grenoble ; while its style of decoration and its relics of an ancient splendour clearly indicated that it had once been the home of a noble. But a casual student of heraldry, Bernard could distinguish the Lion's Paw coupé and the blazon of the House of Feyrolles ; he remembered that Mademoiselle had told him of a kinsman who had lived for some years at Grenoble and of her family's old-time connection with that city. If he had any doubt as to the reason for bringing him to the house, was not she at the stairs' head to welcome him with that merry laugh and winning manner which few who knew her intimately could long resist ? Nothing here, certainly, recalled her adventure of the morning, nor the distress she had then betrayed ; and her very indifference was not less perplexing.

“ Oh, here's a gracious cavalier ! ” she cried.

“Oh, here’s a very knight-errant who leaves his lady to the wolves! Do you know, sir, that supper has been waiting more than an hour? Is it so little concern to you, then, that I must go hungry while you ride up and down after all the pretty women in Grenoble? Come at once. My servants will stable your horse. Do not even wait to ask me why or when. There will be time enough for that when we are alone——”

Her voice fell curiously, and she gripped his arm with a warning hand when she uttered the words. Bernard understood in a moment that they were not alone, and that beneath this mask of gaiety and spirit there lay the quick anxiety, perhaps even the terror which had visited her in the wood that morning. His answer to it all was a courteous apology for his tardiness, and ere this was finished, he found himself in the great room at the head of the staircase, face to face with as benevolent an old churchman as he had ever set eyes upon in all his life.

“My uncle, Monsieur l’Abbé de Feyrolles,” she said quickly, and then in a lower tone to Bernard, “he is a canon of the cathedral here.”

Bernard stared at her with the blankest incredulity written in his wondering eyes. Her disguise, the green coat, the pretty chestnut hair tied caught up in a ribbon as a man’s, the sword at her girdle, the three-cornered hat—this upon the

one side, and upon the other a white-haired old man in a purple cassock, one of the heads of the Church in Grenoble, and yet the willing witness to this young girl's *diablerie*. What did it mean? By what code of necessity or moral subterfuge did the priest justify his approval? Bernard looked at him a second time and understood. The old man was blind.

"Welcome to this house, monsieur," the priest said in a quavering voice. "My niece has told me much of your kindness to her, but you will tell me more. There is little protection for women upon our high roads, God knows; yet that you should pass by at the very moment that she had most need of you was certainly written in the good God's providence. Let me thank you in the Duke's name and my own. It is a far road to Lyons, and few upon it. I blame them that they should send so poor an escort in these days of danger and uncertainty."

"And yet Mademoiselle might have passed a hundred times and no such thing befallen her," Bernard interposed quickly, for he knew nothing whatever of the tale that had been told, and was at his wits' end to learn it. Mademoiselle, upon her part, laughed slyly, and invited him to conduct the Abbé to the table.

"The coach all broken to pieces and my pretty gowns scattered to the wind, uncle," she cried gaily.

“Oh, yes ; you may imagine my feelings when Monsieur St. Armand rode up. ‘Courage, Mademoiselle,’ he said. As if a woman could lack courage when a man rifled her wardrobe ! But I thank you, monsieur, a thousand times,” she said to Bernard, with laughter in her eyes. “The least we can do is to ask you to accept the hospitality of this house while you remain in this city.”

“We shall hear of nothing else,” said the old Abbé firmly, and then recalling himself with some agitation to the events of the day, he went on to declare his political convictions with some fervour.

“We are surrounded by traitors,” he exclaimed ; “they are about us even at the altar. An army could not have opened the gates of this city if traitors did not stand behind them. This is an evil day for France when the soldiers of her King light their torches to guide a rebel’s feet. I fear for honest men, monsieur. The good work of these better months has been undone this night ; and yet I cannot believe that it is finally undone. We are gone over to the rebels—yes, but are there not Marshal MacDonald at Lyons and Marshal Ney himself at Paris ? What are these few regiments of Grenoble against a kingdom ? Is it God’s will that the soil of our beloved country should again be stained with blood to gratify one man’s lust of power ? I do not believe it. His acts are madness, and he will pay a bitter price for them. The

foot of reason will stamp out this evil growth for ever—when reason comes to my unhappy countrymen.”

He spoke with a certain air of resignation, and yet not without the animation of conviction, as though a soldier's heart stirred beneath the cassock, and could beat for his country and her needs. Had his sight been given to him, he would have known that he addressed his words to those who had so little sympathy with them that they found no hope for France but in the supreme rebel whose victory the streets below were still celebrating. As for Mademoiselle, she made no attempt to hide her loyalty to the Emperor, and her blazing eyes and crimson cheeks promised one of those outbursts which had already brought so much of misery and dissension into the House of Feyrolles.

“When France is of one mind, she will have peace, monsieur,” Bernard said at length. “That which she is in most need of is good government and agreement amongst her people. As a stranger, it seems to me that the gates of Grenoble would not have opened to the Emperor to-day if those who govern her had been wise in their time. Let us wish her rulers wisdom whomsoever they may be. She has been long seeking it, and the time does not appear to be yet.”

“I wish her peace—the supreme blessing,” the old man said, and then as the turbulent shouts

came up to them from the streets below, he continued: "I thank my God that these eyes have seen nothing of her misfortunes or her suffering. Let the night be eternal if the day is a day of blood."

Mademoiselle shivered when he uttered these solemn words, but she forbore to answer him, and Bernard discreetly turned the talk to other subjects, and particularly to that of the arts, to which this vast room, with its many treasures from the mediæval ages, so readily lent itself. Never had he seen an apartment of such vast length or one presenting so many contrasts. Here it had the air of a *salon* with furniture and adornments of the Louis Quatorze epoch; there it was a library with ponderous volumes of ecclesiastical literature. Go on a little way, and you came upon a *salle à manger* with buffet and plate and tables for the diners. And the Abbé knew its history as men know the lines of a book; he discussed it eloquently; his trembling fingers were passing over the precious treasures as though to search for the minutest blemish upon them. A Feyrolles heart and soul he lamented the forgotten glories of the House, and exclaimed upon that day of crime and revolt which had sent his kinsmen forth to the humiliation of exile and poverty.

Bernard listened to this panegyric with mixed feelings, partly those of interest, partly of impatience. He was perfectly well aware that Mademoiselle had

some deep purpose in coming to the house of her kinsman at such a time ; and it was no less obvious that she desired ardently to make that purpose known to him. Not solicitude alone for a kindly old man prompted her to remind the Abbé so often of the hour, or to promise him fatigue for the morrow. When at last he bade them both good-night and summoned an old man-servant, nearly as decrepit as he, to show Bernard his room, Mademoiselle's kiss was a thing to hear and see. Quick as lightning she offered her hand to their guest, and whispered the message in his ear.

“In this room, in half an hour,” she said. Bernard answered her with a compliment, and thanking Monsieur l'Abbé again for his courtesy, he followed the old servant down the long corridor and found his bedroom at the end of it.

So, then, there must be no sleep for him to-night. He looked about the spacious apartment with its heavy, well-worn furniture, glanced through its latticed windows at the river, upon which the moon shone brightly, turned down the great canopied bed which would have spoken to him of sleep and rest, and asked himself if these were not better than the fool's road he was about to take for a woman's sake. Whither would this daring mistress of impulse lead him ; in what new intrigue embroil him ? To Paris, she had said, that his fortune might be made ; but it seemed to him that

fortune stood far from him ; and no sooner had he said it than another voice of his desire whispered softly : “ There shall be no count of fortune for you, but only of a woman’s love.”

At which thought he laughed aloud, and then as one intent upon a purpose, he listened to the clocks of Grenoble striking the hour of midnight.

In half-an-hour ! How long the minutes seemed !

CHAPTER IX.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

THE cathedral bells chimed the half-hour after midnight, and before the echoes of their music had floated away to the heights about Grenoble, Bernard opened the door of his bedroom and began to feel his way toward the great salon. It was intensely dark in the corridor, and no sound might be heard within that vast, still house. He was sure that Yvonne had named half-an-hour as the interval of waiting, and he wondered that he did not already hear the sound of her pretty footsteps, or catch the glimmer of the light she would carry ; but he remained without any witness to her presence, and he wondered if he had mistaken her words.

It proved no easy task, simple as he had imagined it would be, to retrace his steps from the immense room, or to find the door of it again. Twice he attempted rooms whose windows, uncurtained to the moonlight, showed him bare boards and dusty emptiness. Farther on again he came to a halt

before a blank wall, wainscotted to the height of some four feet or more ; and here as odd a thing happened as any within his experience ; for while he was passing his fingers along the panelling, a concealed door in it suddenly gave to the palm of his hand, and as the door swung back a face peered at him from the aperture and then vanished instantly.

He knew the face—could have sworn to it among ten thousand, and yet was not wholly prepared to believe the evidence of his senses. What light fell in the corridor came through the door of the empty room, which he had forgotten to shut ; it was but a glimmer, and yet sufficient to outline the monstrous features which had glared at him yesterday from the wood near Gap. The Man with the White Cockade—who could have mistaken that hawk's beak, or the hideous deformities which capped it ? Bernard shivered in spite of himself when the apparition disappeared. Truly had he said that this was a house of perils.

The way was easier now, and he found it without further difficulty. In the great room itself, through whose many windows the moonlight shone abundantly, he at once perceived the figure of Mademoiselle, beckoning him to one of the alcoves ; and he approached her with beating heart and nerves high strung. It was as though the peril stalked at his heels ; he would not have been sur-



"THE MAN WITH THE WHITE COCKADE."

prised had a hand touched him upon the shoulder at any moment.

"Do not raise your voice," she said quickly ; "there are spies even in this house."

"I know it," he replied ; "I have just seen one of them—for the second time since yesterday."

She trembled as her hand drew him into the shadows.

"He is Odo von Ernenstein, Navarren's confederate. Yes, I knew that he had come here. My brother would give him shelter. That is why I wished to see you, Monsieur St. Armand."

"To tell me that we must leave the house."

"Now, at once, if you please. They expect the Marquis at dawn."

"And the Emperor will not protect you ?"

"I shall be their prisoner. How can I see the Emperor, even if I wished it ?"

"Will it be easier for you in Paris, Mademoiselle ?"

"Yes, for I shall warn my lover."

She said it quite simply, as though it were the most natural thing in the world for her to say. Bernard had told himself many times that he must be prepared for such a confidence as this ; and yet when it came to him at last, honest in its candour, without a thought of its meaning, and certainly with no intention to wound, he knew in an instant

the folly of the hope which had carried him out to this amazing adventure.

“Your lover, Mademoiselle? And you ask me to be your ambassador in this?”

“I ask you to help a woman who is alone, Monsieur St. Armand—one who has called you her friend. I do not believe that you will leave her to face the peril alone.”

“It may be so, when I understand the nature of it. Remember how very much I am in ignorance.”

“I must leave this house and be upon my way to Paris before the Marquis of Navarren is here.”

“Is it possible to do that if the house be watched?”

“We must make it possible; we must find a way, Monsieur Bernard.”

“And forget that they will follow us?”

“I wish them to do so. It is our net against them. Hush! What was that? Did you hear anything?”

Bernard listened with ear intent. He distinctly heard a footstep upon the stone stairs outside.

“Yes,” he said; “there is someone moving there.”

“They are listening,” she said in a voice that had become but a whisper. “That is good, Monsieur Bernard; we must not interrupt them. Here

is one who will continue to talk to them ; you see, I have friends even in this house."

She drew him a little way across the room, and Bernard then perceived the figure of a man, resting immobile against a great gold picture frame upon the wall ; but so resting that he himself might have been the picture upon the canvas, inanimate and but dimly outlined in the darkness.

"Speak, Raoul," Mademoiselle cried quickly ; "let them think we are still talking."

She did not wait to learn if he understood her, but, quick as lightning, she turned the handle of a door upon the left-hand side of the picture—a door which was scarcely more than a wicket on the panelling ; and whispering to Bernard that the staircase the aperture disclosed would lead them to the garden by the river, she disappeared from his view, while he, with what address he could, made haste to follow her. Not a little to his surprise he discovered that the narrow twisted steps were covered with a thick carpet, which effectually deadened every footstep. Evidently the Dukes of Feyrolles, when they had a mind to leave their house secretly, took good care that a clumsy foot should not betray them. Perhaps, however, that which amused him most as he quitted the room was the buzzing whisper of the young man, Raoul, who talked to himself earnestly that the eavesdropper at the door might believe his

mistress still to be there. Bernard was laughing still when he found himself in the shadows of the old garden, with Mademoiselle at his side.

“Your young man, Raoul, is a genius,” he said ; “he should be at the Théâtre Français.”

“Hush !” she said. “Odo is not alone, be sure of it.”

The garden of the house, an old-world garden with trees that had helped to make history, in some part ran upon one side of the Duke’s house and thence to the very border of the river, which then lacked the fine quay which now adorns it. Though the moon shone brightly upon its spacious lawns, there was darkness enough beneath the trees to serve any purpose, and the high wall, moreover, cast a tremendous shadow in whose shelter a dozen men might have moved with safety. By this, Mademoiselle now passed swiftly towards the river’s bank ; but at a distance, it might have been, of thirty paces from the brink she stopped abruptly, and touching Bernard’s arm, she showed him that someone already stood there before them, and was keeping watch upon the very boat by which she would have fled the garden.

“Odo is not alone,” she whispered ; “that would be the servant, Varron. If he gives the alarm, there is no longer any hope. And we are so near victory, Monsieur St. Armand ; so very near——”

She looked up at him as one in the depths of despair ; and he, without a moment's hesitation, prepared to deal with the servant, Varron. At that time the whole situation perplexed him greatly, for it seemed to him that if these people wished to keep Mademoiselle in the house they had only to warn the Abbé and all would have been done for them ; but when he came to know the whole circumstance more truly, he understood that it was fear of the Emperor which forbade them to do so ; and that both Odo von Ernenstein and Navarren, his confederate, being little better than common spies, would certainly have fared ill were the Emperor solicitous, as they believed him to be, for the safety of this adventurous girl. So they had determined to detain her by stratagem, if it could be, until Navarren himself arrived at Grenoble and settled the affair once and for ever, both with Mademoiselle and Napoleon.

These were the facts unknown to Bernard as he dwelt one instant upon a problem which perplexed him. It had been easy, of course, to spring out upon the man and trust to his own address to stifle any cry of alarm ; but this course must be attended by considerable danger, and he abandoned it instantly for another, which, hazardous as it appeared to be, was less so in fact than in imagination.

“Show yourself to the man,” he whispered

to her ; “let him hear his name and see you.”

She looked at him incredulously and amazed.

“He will call Odo.”

“We shall be ready for him. Make as though you would speak to him. His curiosity will get the better of him.”

The wisdom of it delighted her. Without another word, she stepped into the bright moonlight, and cried to the amazed sentinel :

“Monsieur Varron—is that you, Monsieur Varron ? ”

The fellow took two or three steps toward her, shading his eyes as though to see her figure more clearly. Just as Bernard had imagined, so it proved to be. He did not give the alarm, nor did such a thing occur to him ; but, standing there surprised, he answered her question.

“Yes, Mademoiselle, it is I, Varron——”

He said no more, for stout arms caught him in their fierce grip, and, holding him face downward upon the grass so that he literally ate dirt, Bernard cried to Mademoiselle to make for the boat. Already he could hear the sound of a door swinging upon its hinges, and stealthy steps upon the grass ; and no sooner was he assured that his companion had reached the skiff than he flung the man from him, and ran to her side. He was but just in time, for the report of a pistol echoed

loudly in the silent garden at the very moment, and a bullet went skimming by his ears to fall with a heavy splash upon the lake-like surface of the river.

Bernard sprang into the boat, and, snatching up a rude pair of oars which might have been a relic of the Middle Ages, he thrust the crazy skiff out into the river and rowed desperately away from the garden toward the open plain, which stretches away magnificently beneath the fortress and the beetling, mountainous cliffs towering far above it. Whither their journey would lead them, what ultimate haven they would find, he could not even imagine. Sufficient that he was afloat with this mistress of adventure and intrigue, and that she had named their destination Paris. He cared little for anything else; nor would he remember that she had spoken of warning her lover.

"Monsieur l'Abbé will wake with strange dreams to-night," he said, when he rested upon his oars for the first time at a distance it may have been of half a mile from the place of embarkation. Yvonne, however, laughed at that.

"They are accustomed to comings and goings at my brother's house," she said; "when next I see him I shall have a story ready for him. The Emperor will laugh if he goes there. Such women as I am are too useful to be caged, Monsieur St. Armand; at least, until we grow old, and can

no longer fetch and carry for men. Some day you will hear more about me, and will say, 'Yes, I knew an adventuress by that name.' I shall be the wife of the Count of Foix then, and Napoleon will be master of the world."

She laughed ironically, with a musical intonation that rang pleasantly across the moonlit river, and seemed to say how very much of an actress she was, and how changing were the moods which dictated her caprice. Alone with her, in the dead of night, drifting upon a stream whose banks were majestic mountains and fertile meadows, the lights of Grenoble twinkling across a marshy pastureland, the armies of Napoleon and the King sleeping cheek by jowl at the foot of that tremendous fortress; alone thus, he could not forbear to ask himself why he should not claim some recompense of his fidelity, and why he should not tell her that if his will could avert it, she would never become the wife of the Count of Foix. It may be, however, that he liked the very ambiguity of their situation, liked, as men do, to ape the *rôle* of protector and friend to a woman who was more than friend and less than mistress. The uncertainty of this night and of those which must come after cast upon him that spell of the unknown which appeals so surely to the romantic imagination.

"Yes," he said, "you may be the wife of the Count of Foix when Napoleon is master of

the world. I grant you as much. Meanwhile, we are going to row to Paris, and it is a long journey, Mademoiselle. Please direct me, lest I lose my way ; and do not forget that we have not slept since yesterday at dawn."

She became serious in a moment. Schemer always, her mind went back instantly to the plan she had conceived.

"My servant Maurice is at the village of Jean-le-Mont with our horses," she said ; "we shall come there in an hour, if you can row as far, Monsieur Bernard. It is some way from the high road, and perhaps we may sleep a little at the inn. I do not think they will follow us by water, for they would not know how soon I should meet my servants. And then from Jean-le-Mont we will take the Paris road and follow them, and the spies will become the spied upon. Do you not see how easy it all is to a woman who thinks, Monsieur Bernard ? Are you not quite convinced that I can be of service even to the Emperor ?"

She laughed again in that key of comedy which at once fascinated and perplexed him. Perhaps he thought his own position a little ignominious, and yet a stronger will than hers resolved ultimately to profit by the very ignominy.

"Undoubtedly," he said, answering to her mood, "you are worth a division of cavalry, Mademoiselle. Meanwhile, do not be too sure that they

are not following us. Have your ears no message for you? I would wager a hundred louis that your friend Odo is not half a mile from us at this very moment."

He let the boat drift and bade her listen. Both could now plainly hear the muffled splash of oars behind them; but this was the odd circumstance, that although they lingered in the shadow of the bank for many minutes together, no other craft approached them; and presently the very mystery of it began to grow upon them, and Mademoiselle shivered as one become suddenly cold.

"Let us get on, Monsieur Bernard," she said quickly. "I am sure there is nothing human there."

"And you are not child enough to believe in the supernatural?" he said, though his own uneasiness was scarcely less than hers.

"I am child enough to believe that there are sights and sounds in the world which are not good for us to hear," she replied honestly. "Let us get on to Jean-le-Mont. This lonely river frightens me. It is just like a living thing, crying out in pain. Oh, please, Monsieur Bernard, let us go on."

He took up the sculls, and with a few vigorous strokes sent the boat over into the moonlight in order to look back from the centre of the stream upon the winding river behind them. It was quite

deserted, and just when he would have told himself that the circumstance was uncanny and baffling, a sudden idea came to him, and he understood that the dipping oars were ahead and not astern of them. They had been so intent upon this thought of pursuit that their ears had deceived them; but he was determined to enjoy Mademoiselle's perplexity a little longer.

"The ghost will certainly sleep at Jean-le-Mont," he said.

"You laugh at me," she replied a little pitifully.

"No, indeed," he said; "I am sorry for you."

"Sorry, Monsieur Bernard? And why sorry?"

"Because you must go to Paris to save a man you love from the folly of his own indecision."

She looked at him with incredulous eyes.

"You are a wizard, Monsieur Bernard."

"Nothing of the kind, Mademoiselle; I am merely gifted with very ordinary powers of observation."

"And they tell you——"

"They tell me that you, having ridden to Antibes to get some papers which might compromise your friend the Count of Foix, were robbed of these papers upon the road to Grenoble, and are now riding on to Paris to warn him that it is so."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Certainly a wizard."

"If you will have it so ; but one who admires the victim of his magic, and will do his best to befriend her."

"By prophecies ? "

"No ; by deeds. We must recover these papers. And destroy them," he added.

"I should have done that at once."

"You would have done so had you not wished to keep some hold upon the Count."

She bit her lip with vexation.

"I am beginning to be frightened of you," she said.

"You shall make an end of it at Paris," he answered with a laugh ; and then, before she could reply to him, a sudden bend of the river showed them the village of Jean-le-Mont, a black outline at the foot of a jagged mountain which at once threatened and dominated it.

"There is Jean-le-Mont," she cried. "I see my servant Maurice waiting with a boat."

"We heard his oars," he replied laughingly. And so, lifting her in his strong arms, he set her ashore.

CHAPTER X.

AT JEAN-LE-MONT.

MAURICE, the servant, at once explained to them that he had left the horses in a wood upon the farther side of the village.

“ You cannot lie at the House of the Black Eagle, Mademoiselle,” he said. “ The hussars from Lyons are there already. I have come to tell you that at some peril. They stop everyone, and their captain likes good wine. The whole village is full of them ; they have sent to reconnoitre in Grenoble, and will have news enough when they go back. Be pleased to come as quickly as possible, Mademoiselle. These fellows have asses’ ears, and they can bray.”

Mademoiselle looked at Bernard blankly when she heard the tidings.

“ We shall certainly have to sleep in a wood,” she said.

He answered that they would be lucky if they slept at all, and following the young man, Maurice, they set out to traverse the village, upon which the cloak of night lay heavily.

By here and there as they went a watchdog barked loudly, and once a shutter was drawn and a gruff voice asked them their business. The village appeared to consist of one straggling street, with an old church in the Romanesque style and a substantial inn, where windows showed a few lights like pale yellow stars against the brighter moonbeams. Here the hussars, who had been sent down from Lyons by Marshal MacDonald, waited for news of Napoleon and his army; but they waited jovially enough, and their hilarious shouts could still be heard from time to time as some fresh jest at the expense of the "Little Corporal" delighted them. These men had been in the mind of the young servant Maurice when he said that his mistress could not lie at the House of the Black Eagle; but there was more than that to be feared of them; for as the little company of strangers crossed the village, a merry patrol suddenly confronted them, and asked them in a thick voice where the devil they were going.

"To your general at Lyons," replied Bernard without a moment's hesitation.

The man looked perplexed and shook his head.

"The captain must hear of this," he said. "Honest men do not go to my general at Lyons at two o'clock in the morning."

"Pardon me," said Bernard imperturbably,

‘your captain himself will shortly be riding that way as fast as a good horse can carry him.’

The man scratched his head, just as though that would help him to gather his scattered wits.

“Do you mean to say that you know what my captain is about to do, monsieur?” he asked blankly.

“I mean to say,” responded Bernard, “that the Emperor’s Polish Lancers will be in this village in half an hour’s time.”

“Napoleon’s Lancers? But Napoleon is already a prisoner over at Grenoble yonder.”

“So much a prisoner that he is even now riding out with five thousand men at his heels.”

“Holy James! But that’s good news, monsieur—I mean to say—— But your excellency takes me so much by surprise. Really you must see the captain.”

“And tell him that one of his troopers wishes good luck to the Emperor? I think not, friend. Do you go and tell him yourself. I repeat that we have business with your general at Lyons. We really cannot help you.”

He pushed his way by, laughing at the fellow’s perplexity. A few clever words had turned a serious danger, and Bernard confessed that he never saw horses with more pleasure in his life than those he found at the head of the village

in charge of a sturdy young Gascon, by name Armador.

"They will follow us, and we must not be caught," he said to Yvonne quickly. "The wood in which we are to sleep will be many leagues upon our road to Lyons. I am glad that your friends escort us."

"This is Armador, who went with me to Elba," she said, by way of introducing them. "I have owed my life to him more than once, Monsieur Bernard. And he knows what I owe to you," she added prettily, as he lifted her on the back of a good black horse, in the holsters of whose saddle he could see the bright barrels of pistols glistening.

"Monsieur Armador understands that the road is likely to be a difficult one," Bernard said, touching the pistols significantly. "If he had another pair for me——"

The young man with the clear black eyes anticipated that question, and would not permit it to be finished.

"Your excellency will find them in the holsters," he said with a laugh, and he added, "Your own horse is in the stables at Grenoble. You will find him there upon your return from Paris."

"If Monsieur ever returns," cried Mademoiselle, as she caught up the reins and made as though to hurry from the village. And then she said,

“He will go back with the Emperor, Armador—when we are both quite old.”

Armador laughed significantly at this, but Bernard, catching a sound from the village behind them, leaped into the saddle, and so put an end to the argument.

“We shall be still young if these fellows catch us, Mademoiselle,” he said, and with that he turned his horse from the high road to the shelter of a spinny upon the left-hand side of the road; and when the others had followed him, he held up his hand for silence. The sounds were clearer now. The hussars galloped out of Jean-le-Mont as though Napoleon himself were at their heels; and dim as the light was, those watching in the wood could plainly distinguish the hard, set faces of the troopers, and the glittering sheen of their accoutrement as the moonbeams struck upon it and caught up a hundred points of glittering light.

This was a critical moment enough, and Bernard caught his breath as the men drew near and some of them hacked at the bushes by the wayside as though a chance sword-thrust might discover the fugitives who could give them such definite news of Napoleon. It were easy to imagine what a woman’s fate would be if she fell into such hands at such a time; and the unanimity with which the men in the wood drew their pistols from the holsters and looked to the priming as the hussars approached

was wonderful to witness. Let a horse so much as whinny, and it would be a fight for a woman's honour and for men's lives, Bernard said, and he believed that he numbered the minutes twice over while the patrol went thundering on, and the grim faces seemed to be looking into his own. When the last of the men had passed, he uttered a sigh of relief; but no man stirred from the wood until the sounds of the hoofs were lost upon the breeze and the lights in the windows of the inn could no longer be perceived.

"Those fellows will not draw rein until Marshal MacDonald has the news," said Bernard as they rode from the wood. "If I do not return to the inn, it is because I think we are better where we are, Mademoiselle. Your other friends may be nearer to us than we think. Let us leave them to their meditations, and get on while we may."

Mademoiselle nodded her head, and in spite of the lateness of the hour and all that she had undergone during the day, she rode with good spirit and all her old animation. They had but a league to make before they came out upon the great high road to Lyons; and no sooner had they begun to follow it than they encountered new witnesses to the momentous tidings of Napoleon's progress, and evidence in abundance that France waked, and would sleep but little on such a night as this.

It was a wild road enough, though it carried them away from the mountains through a wooded plain and that fertile valley land which contributes so much to the wealth of France and the prosperity of her people. Rarely open at that time to the vineyards and the pastures, the way was bordered by forests which might have harboured an army ; and those usually so destitute were now the scene of bivouac fires and sleeping companies, either driven from the south by the news of Napoleon's advent, or going northward to prepare for his coming. Unlike the hamlet of Jean-le-Mont, which lay off the beaten track, the villagers were everywhere awake and watchful. Crowds gathered about the inn doors to snatch a bone of gossip from the horsemen, who would have gone on at all speed toward Lyons and the capital. These people had learned but yesterday of Napoleon's voyage from Elba ; to-day the mounted messengers told them that he was at Grenoble, the master of the forts and, as the bolder spirits declared, the master of France.

To such as these, the assurance that they had nothing to fear from one who returned as the father of his children was useless. The timid among them declared that he would burn the houses and hang all that had bent the knee to King Louis. Many a family went headlong to the hills that night, mourning its pitiful household

gods and believing that the morrow would be red with flames. Their terror was not mitigated by the galloping horsemen who carried the tidings to the cities, nor by Napoleon's own grenadiers who scattered his proclamations broadcast, and compelled the royalists at the point of the bayonet. These good fellows were to be met with about the bivouac fires in many a wood which Bernard and Mademoiselle approached that night. Sometimes they came blundering out to stop the little company and to demand its passports; but Mademoiselle had but to mention her name to them and to remind them that she had been with them at Elba to win their equally boisterous approval and a shower of blessings which full-mouthed oaths expressed. Such episodes made the night short enough; but toward three o'clock of the morning, observing Yvonne's manner and a sudden quaver in her voice, Bernard determined to go no farther; and a little wood with a spring bubbling down its hillside attracting him, he called a halt there, and resolved that they would sleep until daylight, cost them what it might.

"If the man Odo is behind us, as we think, we shall see him better by day," he said to her; and then, "Tired eyes are no good to anyone. Let me make you a bed, Mademoiselle Yvonne, and you shall tell me what you think of it when you wake up."

She consented to dismount, and he lifted her to the ground, holding her for an instant in his arms and looking deep into the anxious eyes which fatigue had dimmed. She suffered his embrace without complaint, and her only remonstrance was upon his calling her *Mademoiselle*.

“Could it not be Yvonne?” she asked him.

“The trees would like it better,” he said; and then, “I believe your heart is in the village still.”

“My heart is in Paris,” she said provokingly. “I do not love the villages.”

The young man Armador, a wonder in his way, produced bread and wine from his capacious saddlebags; and these being served beneath an immense oak, the two servants withdrew a little way, and Bernard found himself as alone with this capricious child of fortune as though he had been upon a desert island with the sea about him and the music of her solitudes in his ears. Obediently now she did his bidding, drinking from the flask, eating her bread, and then consenting to be folded in his cloak and to sleep with his good arm about her, and the gentle stars shining upon her tired face. From the high road there came to them ever and anon the sound of galloping horses and of men who spoke of the misfortunes or the glories of France; but in the wood the calm of night was supreme; and as Bernard reflected upon it all, he asked himself once more what the end of these days

must be, whither and to what fortune did they lead him, in how far were they his friend? For he could not forget that the woman who slept in his arms was by another man beloved, and that he rode with her to Paris to warn this lover of his peril.

CHAPTER XI.

NAVARREN.

BERNARD was the first of the four to be up and ready when the sun rose next morning, and leaving Mademoiselle to play Narcissus at the brook, he walked a little way down toward the high road and looked out over the splendid country through which they must pass on their way to Lyons. The wood in which they had slept stood upon the summit of a considerable hill, from the brow of which a great fertile plain could be seen with the white road and the merry river at the heart of it, and upon either hand the undulating woods and the vineyards with their first promise of a summer abundance. So clear and cool was the air that a man seemed to draw in a very breath of life at every inspiration; and for long minutes together Bernard did not move from the place, but watched the rising glory of the day and the vast green distances, and all that unclouded picture of dawn and her majesty.

A profound believer in the infinite destiny of man, a worshipper ever of the Supreme Intelligence

by which man is and will be, he could not help but reflect upon the calm and serenity of the material world as contrasted with the human sphere of life and action, and all its countless perplexities—its sorrows and its joys, and yet its apparent emptiness. As the sun rose upon this valley to-day, so it would rise again when untold generations of men had lived and ceased to be, giving the same glories to the mountains, breathing upon the waters its silver radiance, calling, it may be, some traveller of the distant centuries to bend the knee in homage and to worship as he worshipped. And his would be a name forgotten then. The eternal mystery would be a mystery to him no more, if it be decreed that man shall ever solve it.

These reflective moods had been common phases of his life at Grasse, but he had known them rarely since he met Mademoiselle. For he had grown less cynical, it may be, and in deeds had found a philosophy which words denied him. So this morning at the hill-top he dwelt but a little while upon the melancholy of the day-dream, and would have turned back laughingly to Yvonne and the breakfast which the young man Armador prepared for them, when he chanced to espy two figures upon the high road ; and something in the appearance of one of them instantly attracted his attention and held him watchful. As the men drew nearer

he knew that he was not mistaken. The taller of the two, a huge fellow dressed from head to foot in black, was certainly no other than the Man with the White Cockade, whom he had seen so strangely at the Duke's house last night. That, however, which chiefly aroused Bernard upon this occasion was the fact that the fellow rode his own horse, "Tony," the one he had ridden to Grenoble and left there in the charge of Mademoiselle's servants. Clearly, then, he had followed them without delay, and the people at the house had connived at his purpose. It was less easy to say why Yvonne interested him now that he appeared to have taken from her the secret she had guarded so jealously; but Bernard imagined that he had been instructed to pry upon her movements, and that he would hover around her until she arrived in Paris, or definitely made an end of her wanderings.

This conclusion had hardly been come to when a second event upset it, for chancing to look away for an instant down the road to Paris, he perceived a travelling coach, accompanied by three or four mounted servants, and labouring heavily in the terrible ruts as it drew towards him. Though nothing but a premonition connected this carriage with the Man with the White Cockade, Bernard was sure that the presence of the one accounted for the vigilance of the other; and he hastened

to conceal himself amid the trees that he might witness the meeting. So close did he stand to the roadside that he could see not only the revolting features of Odo von Ernenstein as he rode by him, but could also hear his very words. The man, however, spoke of commonplace things, and catching sight of the coach at that very moment, he clapped spurs to his horse, and went away at a heavy gallop towards the hollow.

“It is Monsieur de Navarren, without a doubt.”

Bernard turned, to find Yvonne at his elbow. She had crept through the wood, and now stood shoulder to shoulder with him, watching the meeting between Ernenstein and his employer, the Marquis de Navarren.

The coach had stopped by this time, and Bernard perceived a thick-set, foppishly dressed man, whose features he could scarcely distinguish, alight from the carriage and greet the horseman effusively. Odo von Ernenstein, evidently declaring his own deeds earnestly, handed to the Marquis something which the latter plainly received with great pleasure; and then the whole group seated itself by the roadside and a long parley ensued. It scarcely needed Mademoiselle's agitated explanations to inform Bernard of that which was happening.

“So your lover's letters to his friends at Antibes are now in the possession of the Marquis de Navarren,” he said to her, a little satirically.

She sighed, and flushed as though it had been a rebuke.

"They cost me so much to win, Monsieur Bernard."

"The price of many flirtations, I do not doubt, Yvonne. Is the folly which wrote them to be explained?"

She seemed to reflect upon it.

"Men are less faithful to an idea than women," she said presently; "especially when their fortunes are at stake. The Count of Foix has a cousin at Antibes to whom he speaks and writes the secret thoughts which prudent men never confess. The cousin betrayed him to Navarren because he wished for a command at Paris, and the Marquis can give him that. I heard that the young man had the letters, and was to deliver them to Odo upon a particular day. I outwitted them, Monsieur Bernard. Yes, I went before them as Navarren's messenger, and what my words could not do my eyes did for me. Count Paul of Foix is one of those foolish men who try to be the friend of both parties. He has affronted the King in Paris by speaking of the Emperor's return, and he has affronted the Emperor by writing harshly of his abdication and his exile. I tried to save him from his folly, and you have helped me. But it is too late now, and he must pay the price."

He cast upon her a searching glance as though

he would read the wonderful mysteries of that capricious mind, in all its splendid contempt for the common measure of men's passions and its utter inability to look beyond the immediate excitements of plot and counterplot and the rapid rewards of sustained intrigue. Did she care really that the Count of Foix loved her? Had she any answer to his own growing passion for her? Was it anything to her that, should Napoleon fail, she would infallibly become the wife of the Marquis de Navarren? He could hardly believe that it was. And yet he was no less willing to help her.

"It is, at least, not too late to make your Marquis look foolish," he exclaimed, as the idea came suddenly to him; and then he said to her, quickly and a little imperiously: "Please send your young man Armador to me; and tell him that I have need of the horses."

"Monsieur St. Armand," she replied emphatically, "you have ventured too much already for one who can give you no reward. I forbid you to do it."

He laughed at her fears, and pointed out how unnecessary they were.

"You lose time, Yvonne. Yon rogue will be half-way to Grenoble if you delay. Hide yourself in the wood, and we will have him on his marrow-bones. I would as soon fear an Abbé from Notre

Dame ; and remember, your friend the Count will be grateful to us."

She cast a glance upon him at once protesting and reproachful, but she ran away, nevertheless, to do his bidding ; and presently the young man Armador, with Maurice, the servant, came up with the horses ; and all being mounted and the primings of the pistols well cared for, they stood at ambush amid the trees and watched the little group upon the hillside. The Marquis de Navarren, it appeared, was about to make an *al fresco* breakfast, with the grassy bank for his table and a fire of branches for his kitchen. It was amusing to see a proud cook, the chief ornament of his *entourage*, at his wits' end to do justice to his art in these rude circumstances ; but Bernard was delighted with the spectacle, and he waited patiently until the company squatted about the bivouac fire before he made a movement. Then, the time being come, he and the two young men rode headlong out of the wood and descended upon the camp as though they had been a squadron of cavalry at the charge.

So quick were they, and so clear in their purpose, that they were in the midst of the bivouac before any man there had time so much as to draw his sword ; and the young man Armador, flinging himself upon Odo von Ernenstein, and Maurice the servant standing ready with a brace of pistols in his hand, Bernard himself confronted

the Marquis, and proceeded to make himself master of the situation beyond any question of surprise.

"Be kind enough to remove this gentleman's sword," he said to the young man Armador; "since he employs it against women, it can be of no service to him here. The others will sit still until they have my orders to move. I have some little reputation with the pistol, gentlemen. I hope you will not compel me to vindicate it."

The latter words were addressed to the astonished company, none of whom appeared in any way desirous of putting such a reputation as Bernard spoke of to any sort of proof whatsoever. The servants stood, for the most part, with mouths wide open and glassy eyes; the dignified cook continued to stir the chocolate he had been preparing, as though this certainly was no affair of his. Odo von Ernenstein, taken utterly by surprise, had a hand upon the hilt of a sword he was too discreet to draw. The Marquis de Navarren simply sat and stared, as though his ears had not heard the words aright.

"Who are you, sir, and what do you want of me?" he asked Bernard presently.

The answer was brief and absolutely beyond misunderstanding.

"The papers of which Mademoiselle de Feyrolles has been robbed by your servant, monsieur."

“ You are telling a fairy tale, monsieur.”

“ Then name me as your evil genius, Marquis. I compliment a most admirable liar. The papers are there in your breast, monsieur. My young man will be good enough to take them from you.”

“ Ha ! then you refuse me the satisfaction which one man of honour offers to another.”

“ Not so ; I am prepared to give it you here and now, though I say nothing about the man of honour,” he added with a laugh.

The servant Maurice dexterously relieved the Marquis of a little bundle of papers, tied, as women tie such things, with tricoloured ribbon, and still in the order in which she had arranged them. Bidding him keep the packet securely, Bernard had still a further word to address to the youth Armador, who stood guard over the burly German Mademoiselle had so greatly feared.

“ Herr Odo will thank you to take care of his sword, Armador,” he said blandly ; “ he is plainly uncomfortable. I shall then be entirely at the service of Monsieur le Marquis,” he added, turning to the scowling figure at his feet—the figure of a black-bearded, sallow-faced Frenchman, who might have been born in the shadow of the Pyrenees. But Monsieur le Marquis de Navarren had already determined that discretion was the better part of valour ; and he made haste to decline the invitation he had previously appeared so ready to accept.

“I do not go out with highwaymen,” he declared with some show of aristocratic dignity; and immediately upon this a smile of satisfaction crossed his face, and he uttered an exclamation almost of triumph, as he saw that Odo von Ernenstein was upon his feet, and that his sword crossed that of the young man Armador.

The swift change in a somewhat ludicrous situation did not surprise Bernard at all, for he had been waiting for it from the beginning. Such men as Odo von Ernenstein were masters of cunning by profession; and this fellow, a fine specimen of his class, lacked no resource necessary to a “go between” and well paid adventurer. Of his swordsmanship Bernard had already good evidence, and he was convinced that the plucky lad, who now opposed himself to the giant, would have but a few minutes to live if the two were left to fight it out to the end. When he would have interfered, however, he found himself face to face with Odo’s companion, a quick fencer, who had snatched his sword while Maurice took the papers from Navarren, and now cried to the others to imitate him. Instantly a *mêlée* followed—swords clashed, horses whinnied, the clear silence of the morning was broken by the fierce shouts of men and the shriller speech of affrighted animals. Nor was the scene without its humour, for throughout it one could hear the deep baying appeal of Navarren,

who besought his men for God's sake to strike hard ; while, upon this, as Bernard fenced lightly with his antagonist, whom he had no intention of killing, he heard a fierce oath from the silent cook and then a shout of laughter he could by no means understand. Disarming his antagonist after a masterly feint in sixte, which sent the fellow's sword clattering almost into the Marquis's lap, Bernard turned to discover the source of this unexpected merriment ; and never did a man stumble upon a greater surprise, or witness so strange a truce to a dangerous affair.

The youth Armador, who should have lain bleeding from a dangerous wound, stood by the bivouac fire, laughing until great tears rolled down his cheeks. The cook himself had Odo von Ernenstein by the throat, and threatened him with a dose of the chocolate which boiled in the copper pot ; so great was an artist's rage that a *chef d'œuvre* should be lightly treated and even overturned by a common brawl, in whose result he had little interest. Elsewhere the craven lacqueys whom Maurice had lashed soundly with a horse whip ran like hares toward the woods ; while from the summit of the hill Mademoiselle herself rode down toward the bivouac in the company of a dozen stalwart dragoons, whom the uproar had drawn from the shelter of the wood. Here was an interruption which brought Navarren to his senses instantly,

and even went far to appease the wrath of the angry *chef*, who still grieved for a lost ragoût. The Marquis, realising in what a hopeless minority he stood, bawled for his grooms to return, and bade them put the horses to the coach and proceed instantly ; while to Bernard he said ironically, " We will settle this in Paris."

" With a coffee-pot, monsieur," was Bernard's response ; and doffing his hat to Odo von Ernenstein, he continued : " I fear this gentleman must walk, Marquis, for I am going to ask him to return me my horse which he has done me the courtesy to steal from the house of my friends at Grenoble."

The huge German scowled blackly enough when he understood the full meaning of this pleasantry, and for a moment Navarren seemed utterly non-plussed. It was at this moment that Mademoiselle rode up with the dragoons, and at once took a part in the controversy, greeting the enraged Marquis with charming grace, and wittily feigning complete ignorance of the whole affray. Bernard thought that he had never seen her to greater advantage, and he began to understand how considerable were the services she could render to any cause which might win her for a partisan. For here was a man to whom destiny and Napoleon's failure would certainly marry her, if it were that the supreme adventure failed and the King returned to Paris. And yet she could smile upon

him as upon the others, pick and choose her words, and play the *comédienne* to perfection. Bernard listened to her with an admiration that altogether mastered his surprise.

“Monsieur de Navarren!” she cried. “You of all others riding into Grenoble. Surely, then, you have good horses?”

The Marquis glowered savagely, but he kept his temper.

“Why should I need good horses, Mademoiselle?” he asked.

“That you may ride out again without loss of time, monsieur.”

Navarren bit his lip.

“The road that your friends follow is scarcely one for honest men,” he said laboriously.

“I doubt that we shall find any upon it,” replied Mademoiselle with a laugh.

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders; but curiosity got the better of his anger, and he tried to give a serious tone to it.

“They tell me that Napoleon entered Grenoble last night, and rode away again at dawn to-day,” he said with affected nonchalance. “He was mad to embark upon it, Mademoiselle.”

“Undoubtedly mad, monsieur. What sane man would ride to Paris when Monsieur le Marquis de Navarren has promised to destroy him with a division of cavalry? You see, Marquis, we have

the news even in this wild country. Your speeches delight us. We say that France is saved by the newspapers. His Majesty the Emperor trembles, and is afraid. Please ride into Grenoble as fast as this beautiful coach can carry you. They need a leader there, Marquis; one who will close the gates which the Emperor's friends have burned. You can follow us to Paris afterwards to tell his Majesty that you never doubted, and are among the most faithful of his friends. Your speech to King Louis, if you have it by you, is the very thing, monsieur. I remember that you said something like that the last time the Emperor left us. By all means say it again, for it was so beautifully expressed, monsieur."

Navarren flushed deeply at the words, but realising his own impotence, he gave a loud order to his coachman to proceed, and flung back at Mademoiselle one of those amiable threats which so greatly delighted her.

"When we meet at your brother's house in Paris, Mademoiselle, I will resume our pleasant conversation," he said ironically. "Your friend the Emperor will then be able to tell us if the air of St. Helena suits his robust constitution. I leave you to the company of these highwaymen; they will be better able to appreciate your wit."

"My lord," she cried after him, "be kind to me, for I am without a *chef* to protect me." And

at that a salvo of laughter followed the coach, and the savage German laid a hand upon the hilt of his sword, and would have drawn it but for the merry dragoons who hustled him on, and were in no mood to argue.

“Go up with the baggage, rogue, until you can steal another horse,” one of them said to him.

He answered with an oath, and springing up beside one of the lacqueys who rode an immense bay charger, he followed his master upon the road to Grenoble.

“An ugly rascal. We have not seen the last of him,” Bernard said. But Yvonne laughed at another thought.

“They will not ride a league; Navarren is the greatest coward in France,” she said.

And that was true, for as they breasted the next hill on their way to Lyons, they plainly perceived that the Marquis’s coach had been turned about, and that he who had sworn to take Napoleon with a division of cavalry, now drove with all speed toward Paris and safety.

CHAPTER XII.

TO PARIS.

THE Emperor had ridden into Grenoble with some two thousand men to fight the armies of Europe ; but he rode thence with ten thousand at his command, and his progress was little else than a long-drawn triumph. Villages and towns alike now sent their people to the roadside, decked in the tricoloured cockade and hoarse with shouting, “ *Vive l’Empereur !* ” Peasants came from the farms to run with the horsemen and cheer them on. Such a display of flags and banners, of joy and honest welcome, had not been known in France for many a year. No one remembered that there had been a King at the Tuileries yesterday. “ The Little Corporal ” had come back to save his people, and they would show him how grateful they were.

And what of Paris meanwhile—of Paris, where great men and small wrangled so savagely, and generals waged a bitter war of words, and a helpless monarch implored them for God’s sake to put his horses to ? Would Paris do nothing ? Had she no answer to make to the adventurer ? Ber-

nard heard strange tales as he rode toward Lyons with Mademoiselle at his side ; but he no longer dared to speak of them to her. This scheming little partisan, with her merry blue eyes and her tousled chestnut hair, what logic would qualify her faith or moderate her extravagant adulation of the Corsican ? For her the Emperor was all. By him she would reap the reward of the patient years of intrigue and daring, become the mistress of her house and the wife of her lover. She never doubted it. The road to Paris was the road to her goal. The fair city of Lyons coming to her view upon a bright March morning, seemed but another landmark by the way ; yet a noble landmark rising up from the ashes of death and revolution, and opening its gates anew to the one man who had saved France in the hour of her infamies.

She had told Bernard that the Count of Foix would be with Field-Marshal MacDonald's force in this city ; and directly they had entered it from the precipitous southern road by which its gates are reached, she went to the Hôtel Richelieu in the market-place, and sent a message to the barracks with a simple candour and a frank avowal which entirely delighted Bernard ; chiefly because he had failed to be convinced by her earnestness in this matter, and flattered himself, it may be, that he had but to speak to end it. If he hesitated, doubt of his own future and wonder at the situation

in which he found himself were his guiding impulses. What home had he to offer this mistress of a ducal house? What provision could he make for, how justify even a thought of, marriage? England remained a forbidden country for him; he had no friends in France; the disbelief altogether in any hazard of fortune by which Paris would enrich him. The months to come might be months of changing scenes and splendid opportunities, but opportunity must first be wooed and won before he might reckon with it; and he doubted in his heart if Napoleon even yet had convinced him. It was inconceivable to the Englishman that a king should be cast down at the whisper of a name, and a dynasty perish because a grey cloak covered it. Paris would strike a good blow yet; the decisive battle was before them, he imagined.

He had ridden into Lyons upon the evening of the third day after leaving Grenoble; and directly he ascertained that Mademoiselle was about to meet her lover, the Count of Foix, at the hotel, he discreetly announced his determination to persuade the young man Armador to show him the city; and in that he persisted, despite her chagrin.

"You treat me as a child," she said, colouring deeply at her own words. "Must I be left like some little girl to bill and coo in a quiet dovecote? No, Monsieur Bernard, you must meet Count Paul. I wish you to be good friends."

“Impossible, Mademoiselle Yvonne—at least, not yet. I am sure that you will have much to tell him and some good advice to give him. Say that only a very wise man or a fool writes all his thoughts. I will not be here to put a curb upon his gratitude. You can choose another opportunity to present me.”

He looked deep into her eyes, and seemed to read both embarrassment and humour there; but she affected annoyance when he left her, and insisted upon the necessity of his speedy return.

“The Count is with his regiment,” she said; “our interview must necessarily be very brief. Remember, I am easily lost, Monsieur Bernard, as you discovered at Grenoble. You may not find me so readily a second time—or wish to do so,” she added naïvely.

“I will answer that when a response is necessary,” he said; and so he left her to meet the Count, and set off with the young Gascon to see what the new-born city of Lyons could show him.

Little more than twenty years before this date, the Republicans of France had razed Lyons to the ground because the better among its citizens were opposed to the mad excesses of the National Convention. A short defence against the ruffians sent by the Republic to destroy the city soon gave place to the crimes of the insane Collot d’Herbois,

which sent the living and the dead to the open tomb, and scarcely left one stone standing upon the other wherever a rich man's house incited the anger of the rabble. That was the day when the arch-ruffian Couthon made them lift his paralysed hands that he might strike the houses with death and fear ; and so often had the hammer of his lust fallen that acres of desolation remained his brief monument during the terrible years. But cities rise again, even more speedily than nations ; and Lyons could show broad squares and noble façades to the armies of King Louis, which gathered there under the command of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois and the redoubtable Field-Marshal MacDonald to oppose the Emperor. True, there were still the landmarks of ruin to speak of a fallen Republic ; but these were few and disappearing ; and in the main the city had regained her splendour, and echoed the martial note which must awake the meanest spirit, and never fails to appeal to some of the finer qualities in men.

There were soldiers everywhere ; infantry slouching to and from the wine-shops ; lancers in green uniforms ; dragoons in scarlet ; artillerymen strutting the pavements with laughing girls for their escort ; aides-de-camp going at the gallop from barracks to barracks ; officers glancing at the menus the *cafés* displayed—a veritable occupation, in fact, during which men spoke of many things,

but thought of one ; uttered many names, but had kindly ears for one name alone. The Emperor—where was he to-day ? A week ago the newspapers wrote that the “cannibal has left Elba and crossed to Fréjus.” To-day they announce that “his Majesty has marched from Grenoble, and is expected shortly to give battle to Field-Marshal MacDonald.” Little wonder that the troopers themselves were ironical, or that their generals asked in hushed whispers, “Will they stand ? ”

This doubt had been with them since they quitted Paris so valiantly, and assured the dotard King that they would crush out the madness with a volley from their eager rifles. They had but half believed it then, but now they wholly doubted. Would these veterans, who had never ceased to utter the name of Napoleon with awe and reverence, would these, who had followed him through heat and cold, in sunshine and in rain, over the living and the dead to the glory of victory and the bitterness of retreat, would they pull the triggers which should end the God-given Master’s life ? And those others, the lads in the flapping boots, who as boys had played to the music of Napoleon’s armies, who had heard the name at their mother’s knee, who had lisped it as little children and cried it joyfully as men, would the hand be found among them to strike Napoleon down ? Quaking Marshals

of France, whose boasts stuck in their throats and choked their utterance, knew that such things would never be; they knew that the glory of a name was spreading over France as a wave of radiant light; searching the heart of Napoleon's children for the love that lay hidden there; blotting out the darkness of despair and obloquy, driving the craven before it to remoter shadows; striking height and valley alike and glowing most brightly upon the highest pinnacles of men's hopes and fidelity. They knew that nothing short of the act of God would stop this mighty magician who had said, "Soldiers of France, I return to my children." A king had been crowned, but the people knew him not. The day was at hand when his very friends would deny him and forget that he had lived.

If these realities were at the heart of the military occupation of Lyons as Bernard St. Armand and the young man Armador observed it, little evidence of the truth was to be had by the casual passer-by, or even by the traveller in quest of news. Gossips told you that the Corsican certainly had left Grenoble, but that the hour of reckoning was at hand. "MacDonald will be too much for his canaille," they said; "a whiff of grape-shot will set those fellows running like clowns at carnival." In the *cafés* loud-tongued officers drank heavily, and laughed overmuch at the

childish nature of their task. "We shall drive Boney's coach to Paris, and that will be the end of it." The priests, given to invoking the Deity to save their coffers, thought it unnecessary to offer special prayers upon such a very satisfactory occasion. These, at least, were without qualms for the morrow, though had you probed the hearts of the others you would have touched conflicting emotions enough ; and many a soldier would have whispered to you apart a hearty God-speed to the Little Corporal upon his journey. For that matter, the common excitement could not be denied ; and Bernard and his companion descried it everywhere in the throngs which gathered in the public places, in the going to and fro of soldiers, in the very gestures of those who passed them by. Of these they did not doubt that some were Napoleon's enemies ; but the most part were secretly his friends, though their friendship may have wanted the fine enthusiasms and the real sacrifices offered to it by Mademoiselle Yvonne. Bernard was not surprised that his talk should be both of Yvonne and the Emperor when he was tired of walking, and had entered a *café* with the young Gascon at his side.

"Mademoiselle will have much to say to the Count," he suggested a little bitterly ; "we must continue to give her the opportunity, Monsieur Armador. Please to order wine, since there seems to be no more profitable occupation."

The Gascon called to them readily enough to bring a bottle of the wine of Burgundy ; for he was a thirsty soul—like his fellows, and the drinking of wine and the kissing of pretty women seemed to him as desirable an occupation as a man might find in any city. When the glasses were set and the waiter no longer fingered the sous they pushed to him, he answered Bernard very honestly :

“The Count will need all the leisure we can give him in that quarter, excellency. There will be no wine at Lyons if we wait until his affair is settled.”

Bernard looked up quickly—so quickly that his astonishment would have betrayed him to a child.

“Then I am wrong in my conclusions, Monsieur Armador ? ”

The Gascon drained his glass and filled another before he replied :

“We should never conclude anything where a woman is concerned, excellency. There is no conclusion to their story. Oh, yes, I grant you that their names were knocked together in Paris—that was, when they spoke of marrying her to Monsieur de Navarren. But his star goes down with the King’s, and she must find another story. I know what I think, but I do not tell it to any man. Ride to Cagnes and cross the sea, and hear what Porto Ferrajo has to say. Well, it would not be

the first time that a pretty woman had sold her birthright for an Emperor's smile, excellency; and I know nothing. Here she was in Paris, the mistress of a fine house, with an army of servants at her nod and all the men on her stairs; and what does she do but ride off like a *vivandière* to a battle-field? And the next we hear of her she is at Elba, and Madame Pauline is calling her sister. Think you she would not have found a way with the Count of Foix if his had been the business which carried her south? I tell you she would have married him though the King himself had cried 'No' from the altar."

"And yet," persisted Bernard, for the whole meaning of it was slow to come to him, "and yet she goes to Antibes to do the Count a service, Armador."

"She goes to Antibes that Navarren may not call him a traitor. Yes, I grant that. If the Count of Foix were publicly exposed as the friend of the Emperor and the enemy of Napoleon, Paris would point the finger at her. She is too clever for that, excellency; and yet there may be more. Women are inscrutable. I do not pretend to understand them; one needs to be a very old man to do that."

"Say that one needs a second childhood, Armador. At least this much is clear to us—the Emperor has no more devoted servant."

“She would give her life for him, excellency. He knows it, and I believe that he will recognise it. No reward could be too great for the services she has rendered him, both in Paris and at Vienna. Her hand has carried all the letters to the Empress. If Marie Louise returns to France, Yvonne de Feyrolles will be the instrument of her return. You will see what will happen when we are all at the Tuileries again—that will be our day of reckoning, excellency; but I for one shall open my mouth if the Count of Foix has any share in it.”

Bernard did not answer him immediately, although the conversation greatly interested him. Sipping his wine slowly, he reflected upon the many meanings which might attend the young man's words. The worst construction he would not put upon them. A man is rarely mistaken when a question of a woman's honour must be judged; and he had been sufficiently intimate with Mademoiselle, had known enough of her generosity, her sweetness, and her sincerity, to deny with indignation the evil suggestion which the Gascon could utter so lightly. But, even granting this, the truth of it all defied him, and by its very evasiveness made its pursuit more fascinating. This very morning he had said that he had no right to perpetuate their intimacy, or to seek any further profit by it; but the idea gradually forced

itself upon his mind that he was helpless in the matter, and that destiny insisted upon his perseverance. With this there came for the first time a whisper of a better voice, which said: "Your life is not lived; it may begin in Paris." Yes, that Paris of all the hopes and fears, the riches and poverty, the opportunities and the successes, had it nothing, then, for him? His blood was stirred by a sudden animation and the birth of a great purpose which he would tell to none. In Paris, Mademoiselle had said that he might win fortune. He asked himself, Why not? Why not for him as for countless others who had marched to wealth beneath the banner of the Emperor, fame and its rewards about the purlieus of a throne? It might be so even yet. It might be so if the miracle came to be, and this mighty genius, which had humbled Europe once, should humble her again. Had not Mademoiselle promised that it should be? He believed the Gascon when he said that in Paris Napoleon would refuse nothing that Yvonne de Feyrolles asked of him.

A clatter of artillery upon the pavement before the *café* aroused Bernard from his reverie, and he rose abruptly in a determination to return to the hotel and hear the news it had to give both of Yvonne and the Count. There was much new excitement in the streets as he passed through them, for news had just come in of the Emperor's

speedy progress toward the city ; and the rumour went abroad that some of the regiments had already thrown down their arms, and were gone off headlong to join the eagles. Bernard, however, hurried on in silence ; and when he came to the Hôtel Richelieu, he went at once to Mademoiselle's room, and was not a little astonished to find the door of it open. Knocking twice and being unanswered, he entered without further parley, and immediately discovered that the room was empty. To his excited questions, a stern and somewhat melancholy host answered that Mademoiselle had ridden at all speed for Paris, he believed in the company of Monsieur le Comte de Foix. When Bernard would have pressed him further, he pointed to a letter upon the table, and seemed to apologise both for its existence and his own.

“ Her ladyship insisted,” he protested. “ I am but the servant of her wishes. Let your excellency be patient with me.”

Bernard tore the letter open with impatient fingers, and read the briefest scrawl :

“ In Paris at the Hôtel Feyrolles I await my friend's displeasure. Let Monsieur Armador be my messenger. He will open the door by which fortune comes. I remember, and am grateful.”

He read the letter twice and then tore it across. Undoubtedly she had ridden to the capital with the Count of Foix. And he must follow her like

a lacquey—to what if it were not the brief splendour of a mad hour and the cataclysm of the years which should come after ? He swore that he would return to Grasse as he had come, quit the dream, and forget that it had been ; and swearing it, he heard the distant thunder of the cries which made it known to all the world that the army of Lyons had gone over, and that its generals fled headlong before the Emperor.

To Paris ? Must he succumb, then, like these others ? Had the mighty magician entrapped him so surely ? He knew not ; nevertheless, he was at his window when Napoleon rode in, and his heart trembled at the tumult of sounds which swept through the city.

To Paris, because Yvonne was there ? Again he said that he knew not. But he ordered his horses for dawn, and the young man Armador rode at his side when he quitted the city and turned his face toward the capital as to some land of mystery wherein all should be lost or won, as destiny decreed.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE HÔTEL FEYROLLES.

PARIS waited for the coming of Napoleon with pursed lips and quaking heart. Her fine shops were shuttered and closed; her theatres were empty; her Press distracted and impotent to prophesy. Upon all her public places groups of men gathered to ask once more the supreme question, Is it victory or defeat for the Man of Elba? The King had fled, and the women in the palaces were busy tearing up every pretty emblem of their loyalty to the Bourbons.

Paris cared little at heart, it may be, for the merely abstract principle, King or Emperor; but she was weary of the sycophants who governed her; weary of historic inertia and the flagrant abuse of her liberties which rewarded an epoch of passive loyalty. Helpless before the armies of Europe in the year 1814, she had sullenly permitted them to send Napoleon to Elba; helpless still, she would welcome the tragic-comedy of his return, and that greater evil which must follow upon it.

Friends of the Bourbons had put it abroad that the Emperor would levy a heavy toll of vengeance upon this complaisant city; but none save the very timid believed this story. True, your fat jewellers in the fashionable quarters, your hosiers, your hatters, and proprietors of the splendid *cafés* made haste to have the paint-pots ready lest the Little Corsican should catch them with the Royal arms still above their doorways. A fine daubing there would be to-morrow if Monsieur le Duc de Berri and Field-Marshal MacDonald, the stern Scotchman, did not stop the Emperor upon the road to Melun. And how the fine ladies of Paris tired their pretty fingers in stitching the tri-coloured cockades their brothers would wear if the worst came to the best, as Napoleon's friends put it, and his Majesty arrived at the Tuileries after all! Even the mightiest affairs have their little pitiful comedies attending; and surely the escape from Elba was no exception. Paris laughed when she heard of the scramble at the palaces; but her face was long enough when horsemen from Melun began to ride in with stories of a Royalist defeat, and the amazing rumour that the Duc's troops were arm in arm with the invaders, and that the Almighty alone could save the wineshops.

Bernard St. Armand heard this rumour as he entered Paris with the young man Armador upon the evening of the seventeenth day of March.

It was a false report enough in so far as it anticipated the Emperor's victory by some hours; but the magical nature of it could not be lost upon an observer, and a man might hold his sides with laughter twenty times between the Fontainebleau Gate and the Rue de Rivoli. What a dashing to and fro of excited horsemen! What a shuttering of shops and barring of doors! The devil himself might have been crossing the Place de la Concorde with a squadron of fiends at his heels, to judge by the hurried desertion of the streets and the martial sounds which fell thereafter. Paris went to earth like a fox that has sighted hounds. And yet she wished for the coming of Napoleon as much as she had the heart to wish at all.

The afternoon had been cold and dull, a chill afternoon following upon a morning drizzle; and it was not by any means a gay-looking city which the weary men rode through, nor did any official see fit in that hour of panic to ask them whence they came or what papers they carried. Mud-bedraggled, upon tired horses, famished and thirsty, their first thought was of supper; their second of bed. Bernard had visited Paris years ago in the days of his well-being; but he was not intimately acquainted with the city, and he had entrusted himself entirely to this pleasant-tongued Gascon, who promised a handsome lodging and most excellent entertainment until, as he said, Made-

moiselle should come and speak for herself. To this Bernard assented without dispute. For what else had he come to Paris were it not to see Mademoiselle, and to learn the truth concerning her amazing story?

Did she follow the Emperor as one who loved him, or as a partisan?

The days would show him — the days which made her amongst the greatest in Paris or abased her to the lowest ebb of outrageous fortune.

He had asked no questions of the young man Armador as to their lodging, nor was he very curious upon the point. He observed, however, that they kept upon the south side of the river, and he imagined that the youth was making for the Quartier Latin, and one of the old inns which might harbour them secretly there. When at last he put a question upon the subject, the answer astonished him as much as anything he had heard that day.

“Is your inn far yet, my lad?” he inquired, as they entered the fine Faubourg St.-Germain, and its lamps began to twinkle in the gathering darkness.

“It is not an inn, excellency,” the Gascon answered.

“Not an inn? Then you go to the house of a kinsman?”

“Not so, excellency ; I am going to the Hôtel Feyrolles.”

“To the house of Mademoiselle ? Impossible ! ”

Armador shook a good head of flaxen hair, and appeared to enjoy his companion’s astonishment very much.

“Mademoiselle wished it,” he said slyly. “She would hear of nothing else. We are to go to the Hôtel Feyrolles, and either find her there or await her coming. I had precise orders, excellency, and must obey them.”

“But her brother, the Duke—will he not be there, man ? And is he likely to welcome his sister’s friends ? ” It was an angry exclamation ; Bernard believed that the lad was jesting, and he resented the liberty. Armador, however, persisted in his humour, and repeated his conviction.

“My mistress will not hear of you going to any other house, excellency. If her brother, the Duke, is there we shall find him not less hospitable than his sister. True, he is the tool of Navarren ; but the Marquis will never show his face in Paris until he has made his peace with the Emperor, and that will neither be to-day nor to-morrow, excellency. There is the reason why Mademoiselle commands us to go to her house. Monsieur le Duc needs all her influence with his Majesty ; he will not be unwise enough to affront her friends.”

The logic of it was irrefutable, and Bernard

had nothing more to say. The troublesome problem of his visit to Paris would be settled by this little wisehead of a girl in the same bold manner as she had already dealt with so many of his difficulties. He reflected with pleasure that he would thus enjoy an intimate association which no inn could have made possible ; and some, it may be, of his new-born ambitions encouraged him to follow the Gascon very willingly to the great door of Mademoiselle's house, which was then one of the most considerable in all the Faubourg St.-Germain.

Night had fallen when they arrived at the courtyard of the house, and it was a little surprising that no lamp guided the stranger to the lodge gates, nor gave any indication of the presence of a concierge. In plain truth, this house was no exception to the others so far as evidence of occupation was concerned ; and throughout the whole length of the Faubourg St.-Germain it had been impossible to find three noble families who had waited for the final tidings of the Emperor's victory or defeat. Those brave people, who had told you a week ago that the Corsican bandit would be hanged or shot at Grenoble, now fled headlong toward the Belgian frontier, following their master, the King, in his craven bolt for safety and a distant land. Paris would laugh at them presently ; but to-night she was anxious and restless, and her citizens withdrew to their houses until the

Emperor's patrols should tell them of his victory. So her streets were dark and empty ; and when the young man Armador knocked loudly at the door of the Hôtel Feyrolles, the blows were heard by the quaking servants of the house as a very summons from Napoleon himself.

"Monsieur le Duc has gone to ground," the Gascon said with a laugh. "He thinks we are the devil with a black eagle."

He beat again loudly upon the massive door, crying, "Within there ! Open to Mademoiselle de Feyrolles !" and such persistency was at length rewarded by the appearance at the wicket of the monstrous head of a stable-boy sent by a trembling concierge to discover who came and what was his business. A few brief words of reassurance brought the concierge himself to the gate ; and when he heard the name of his visitors and understood that they carried a letter from Mademoiselle to the Duke, he at length opened the massive portals and permitted the travellers to ride through. Within the courtyard they found the same air of desolation, the same silence and ominous darkness. Upon this house, as upon the houses of other nobles, the shadow of Napoleon fell heavily, and comedy rode cheek by jowl with the greatest tragedy in the story of the nations.

"Is your master at home ?" the Gascon asked of the concierge.

That discreet official made a discreet reply.

"The Duke, my master, is confined to his bed by indisposition," he said.

"More likely under his bed," the Gascon whispered to Bernard; but to the concierge he said, "Pray inform him that Monsieur St. Armand, who has the honour to be mentioned by Mademoiselle to her brother, is at this moment arrived from Melun."

"I will do so without delay. Did your excellency say from Melun?"

"From Melun and the Army."

"Then you have news of the bandit?"

"His Majesty the Emperor will ride into Paris to-morrow."

"God save us all! We are surely dead men."

"That depends upon your treatment of his Majesty's friends. We shall give a good account to him."

"I will serve his excellency with armagnac fit for the Pope. Good God, what a monster! They say he will hang half Paris, monsieur."

"Then take good care to be among the fortunate moiety. And be sure to inform the Duke at once."

The old servant, who had a face which might have served to decorate a gargoyle at Notre Dame, bellowed for stable-boys to come and see to the

horses, and then summoned lacqueys to conduct the visitors to the house. These fellows had been hiding in any convenient hole or corner which would shelter them, and they came forward unwillingly enough to light the splendid lamps in the splendid hall, and to show the strangers their bedrooms. Soon the gloomy mansion began to wear an air of magnificence and bustle. The Duke, its master, was not to be found, however. The footman, who had been sent to summon him, returned with a dismal face.

“My master is not in his room,” he said. “I fear that he has quitted Paris, excellency.”

“Then it is left for us to intercede for your lives with the Emperor,” the Gascon retorted with a sly look at Bernard; and so bidding him be brisk, he commanded supper, with the intimation that he hoped to be able to give a good account of them to Mademoiselle to-morrow. The result was a diligence surpassing words. The finest wines, the choicest food the house could offer, were set hastily upon the great mahogany table in the vast dining-room. Scores of candles in fine sconces gave light to the immense apartment. In the kitchen, in the stables, a new activity arose; and it might have appeared to a passer-by that some magician had touched the Hôtel Feyrolles with his wand and bidden the sleepers awake. When Bernard at length went up to bed, he was shown

into the room wherein, as they said, the great Cardinal Juan de Feyrolles had spent the busiest years of his intriguing and busy life. He wondered as he entered it if Mademoiselle Yvonne had inherited her talent and her amazing independence from the same ancestor as this masterly and successful churchman.

He was in her house ; her guest at her own request ; in some sense her prisoner, since he owed it to her at least to await her coming before he embarked upon any course of his own choosing.

The supreme folly, successful beyond belief in its audacity, had carried him here to this mansion with its superb tradition of old France, its roll of mighty names, and its unsurpassable traditions of glory and renown. The mistress of it, made doubly sure in her authority by the Emperor's presence, was the woman he loved as he had never loved in all the days of his reckless youth and headstrong manhood. Let Paris reward him as she rewarded so many who had the brains to profit by her misfortunes at that season of change and opportunity, and he might even have the right to claim Yvonne de Feyrolles as his wife, and to come to this house as its acknowledged master. A new optimism, born of adventure, promised him even that ; but first, said the voice, you must win the right.

He fell to sleep upon it at last, dreaming of Mademoiselle and her promises ; but a cloud hovered upon the fairer picture, and the voice whispered again as it had whispered upon the road to Paris, that Yvonne loved the Emperor, and for love of him had ventured all.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO THE TUILERIES.

BERNARD had believed that Yvonne would return to Paris some time during the next day, but he was disappointed in this, and there was still no news of her upon the second morning, when he questioned the young man, Armador, very closely, to be sure that nothing was being kept from him. The answer was invariably the same. Mademoiselle would return with the Emperor, neither before nor after; but at the very hour he rode into the city she would be found at the Hôtel Feyrolles.

“Then you do not believe that she is with the Count of Foix?” Bernard asked him.

The Gascon had a sly face when he answered:

“It is possible, excellency. Anything and everything is possible to my mistress.”

“Do they think well of the Count in Paris, Armador?”

“He is one of the finest officers of cavalry that we have, excellency.”

“One of the Emperor’s friends, I believe?”

“Devoted to him since Grenoble, excellency.”

“And to Mademoiselle also, I suppose?”

“He would die for her—if it did not cost him anything, excellency.”

They laughed together, and Bernard was angry with himself for the momentary vexation his vanity had caused him. In the case of any other woman but Yvonne de Feyrolles, it would have been an outrageous thing enough that she should be riding over France in the company of a young officer; but her adventurous habit of life had become so much a part of her existence, and she was so capable a mistress of her own fortunes, that her closest friend would have suffered no anxieties upon her account. That which remained was the puzzle of her pretended affection for the Count of Foix and the cleverness with which she had diverted Navarren's suspicions, and covered her own purpose in riding to Grasse. Here was comedy, Bernard said; and yet, despite it all, the uneasiness remained; for had not she called the Count of Foix her lover?

“I shall give her three days, and then find a lodging for myself. It must be plain to everyone that I cannot remain in this house under these conditions,” he said to the Gascon. But Armador smiled at that.

“You will not go away until your curiosity is gratified; men never do when a woman is concerned,” he said, and added, with some good reason, “she owes much to you, excellency; you

saved her liberty—perhaps her honour—at Grasse, remember.”

“When she was on her way to visit the Emperor,” Bernard exclaimed a little ironically.

“Exactly, monsieur ; when she went to carry his letters to the Empress at Vienna.”

“Good God ! Did she do that ? ”

“Certainly. His Majesty’s letters to his wife and hers to the Emperor were often sent by Yvonne’s hand for better security. The Marquis, to whom her brothers would marry her, discovered her purpose and informed the King. That is why hussars followed her to Grasse when she took refuge in your house. Do not think that she is insensible of what she owes to you, or that the Emperor has not been informed of it. He will have much to say to you when you are summoned to the Tuileries.”

Bernard smiled with a typically incredulous and English smile—the answer of a man who hoped little of life and put no faith in princes. He would be a very old man, he thought, before Napoleon’s gratitude enriched him ; and he would not be at the pains to argue with the Gascon upon such a story of the fables. Indeed, he desired to be alone until Mademoiselle should come, and he passed a long day in the deserted streets of Paris, watching the few citizens who waited about for the dread tidings of Napoleon’s coming, and

hearing ever and anon some gossip from Melun or Fontainebleau which made it known that the momentous hour was at hand.

Paris was very silent, very anxious; and yet there were moments when a harsher voice spoke out and a deeper truth of revolution might be learned. Bernard came face to face with such a truth upon the afternoon of the second day, when, having passed another night without tidings of Mademoiselle or of her friends, he walked by the Louvre about the hour of four o'clock, and presently heard a rolling sound of drums and a great roar of voices, such as Paris had not heard since the days of the Terror. Anon, from a narrow street by the Palais Royal, a vast and tattered mob emerged, a ghoulish company, in which fish-women from the markets marched shoulder to shoulder with ruffians from the quarters beyond the Temple; and all that had been the glory of murder and atrocity showed a smiling face to an apathetic city. These monsters believed that Napoleon would let them loose once more upon the new order and its satellites; they believed that the Imperial victory would be their victory, and that to-morrow they would do again as they had done in the famous years when there had been white throats for their knives, and all the unbridled lust of rapine and assassination. The very air seemed fouler when they had passed by;

the cloudy day gathered new clouds of darkness as though their threats had called down the night prematurely.

Ah, this Paris ! how the fore-ordained gratified her love of drama broad-painted and the swift changes in mood and action which so delighted her. Scarce had Bernard walked a quarter of a mile toward the new Place de la Concorde (but yesterday the Place de la Revolution), when he came face to face with a second picture which excelled by far in its appeal even to a dull imagination. Two thousand dusty soldiers, coming in from the Fontainebleau road, cried to all who passed them by that the Emperor was at their heels, and would be in Paris before nightfall. Scarce were they heard when it seemed that a countless multitude began to people the city. Down came the shutters from the wineshops ; up went the Imperial arms above them. Banners which had been hiding ashamed this week or more were out of the windows like one o'clock. Let the day be as unpropitious as it might, the mist and fog chilling, the heavens dark and forbidding, what cared Paris for that ? "*Vive l'Empereur !*" The stoutest Royalists shrieked the loudest lest their necks should be first in the noose. Little children became sycophants at their fathers' bidding. The prettiest girls in the city prayed for soldier lovers, and cared not a sou whether they

served King or Emperor. Wine ran like water, so that the heroic two thousand, dusty and hoarse with shouting, quickly lost their speech and their legs together, and could no longer hiccough a single loyal sentiment even from the gutter.

Bernard pushed his way from the throng, disgusted, it may be, that the setting up of kings should show humanity in so poor a light; and, anxious to see what the better part of the populace thought of it, he made his way toward the Tuileries, and discovered that the great palace was already ablaze with lights; while in its gardens no vaster crowd had gathered since a howling mob rushed in to murder and to pillage in the dread days when another Louis had been king. Here stood a robust middle-class, anticipating good trade at the Sign of the Eagle. Great dames, fawning yesterday upon an inert and helpless monarch, had been stitching the tricoloured favours all day, and were ready with them to-night. They crowded the corridors and the galleries, were splendid upon all the balconies, and at no time so bewitching as when tears stood in their eyes because of the joy which had come to their Emperor. These would welcome Napoleon with kisses if he wished it; and many a one among them, remembering his tenderness toward the sex, hoped something for herself because of it.

To Bernard, the palace appeared to be the

final temple in the Mecca of his pilgrimage. If it were, as the young man Armador hinted, the Emperor's intention to summon him there, then these forbidden portals would be forbidden no more; he, too, would hear the voice of adulation and of flattery, and be, in some part, an actor in that splendid company. To-night he could but watch it with awakened curiosity; and as the moments passed, as the press waxed greater, and horsemen rode up and down in their gorgeous uniforms, and every bell in Paris rang out its musical welcome, he regretted no longer that he had come to Paris at Mademoiselle's bidding, and here thrown down the glove to fortune. Let the worst befall; let the armies of Europe shatter this idol, as inevitably they must; what mattered it if a man had lived to-night to tell the story to his children and his children's children?

It was full dark when the Emperor at length drove up to the gate of the Tuileries, Count Bertrand upon his right hand, General Drouot upon his left. The people had ripped the green coat almost off his back, as he crossed the Champ de Mars; here, at the palace gate, they so swarmed upon him that he must fight, step by step, for the throne so hardly won. For an instant Bernard saw a short, pale-faced man, with flashing eyes, uplifted above the throng, embraced by a hundred arms, deafened by their cheers, almost blinded by

the lights. Then the portals engulfed him, the guard drove the people back, the mob went rioting through the streets, the wineshops rolled their butts to the very gutter. The great scene had ended, and Paris was left to watch through the long night of hoarse cries and drunken joy, and all the aftermath of delirium.

The Little Corsican had come by his own again.

A grimmer voice, ironical and not to be stifled, alone asked :

“How long shall this thing be ? ”

CHAPTER XV.

FAITH AND DOUBT.

BERNARD had forgotten the very existence of the Hôtel Feyrolles during the changing hours of this supreme spectacle ; but he remembered it directly Napoleon had entered the palace, and pushing his way from the shouting throngs, he set out to cross the river and so find Mademoiselle. Some instinct told him that she would return to her house immediately upon her arrival in Paris ; and in this he was not mistaken. The great mansion, with its blazing lights and its open portals, appeared to him as some little replica of the palace he had just quitted ; and he had scarcely entered the vast hall when he perceived Yvonne herself standing at the head of the marble staircase, ready to welcome him with both hands outstretched.

“What shall be done to the man who keeps my *chef* waiting ? ” she asked, holding his fingers in hers and leading him toward a little salon at the stair’s head. “Do you know, Monsieur Bernard, that it is already nine o’clock ? ”

"I know nothing which is not pleasant to know," he answered in her own mood. "Be merciful to me, and let them serve dinner at once."

It was characteristic of her, he thought, that she should make no mention at all of her flight from Lyons, and the mystery which had accompanied it. Here, in Paris, she received him as she might have received any old friend honoured by an invitation to her table. His astonishment was rather at the beautiful woman he now saw before him; not the Yvonne of the green coat and the soldier's mien, but a graceful girl, magnificently attired in the clinging white draperies and high corsage of the Empire *cri*—every limb superbly developed; the flesh deliciously pink and soft; the eyes of the purest blue, round and true as a child's; the hair of the richest chestnut hue; the whole attitude seductive and voluptuous as of one who had loved and been beloved. Standing in the salon, with historic pictures for her background and the magnificent masterpieces of the Louis Quinze furniture all about her, Bernard recognised that she was indeed the worthy heiress of a great race, and that the blood of French nobles ran in her veins. Nor could he help but contrast the present with that day when she had come to him as the little fugitive of the hills, and his cloak had shielded her from the hussars at Grasse.

She was not alone in the salon. An exceedingly

handsome man, with a strikingly boyish face and eyes that might compel a woman's notice, stood upon her right hand; while upon her left Madame Fauvalet, a pretty little woman with raven black hair and a *retroussé* nose, talked and laughed incessantly, and at once turned an amorous glance upon the tall Englishman. The whole party evidently had been waiting some time for Bernard, whose embarrassment both at his costume and his tardiness greatly amused Mademoiselle.

"Travellers obey neither time nor ceremony," she said to the others, as she invited Bernard to lead her to the dining-room. "My friend, Monsieur Bernard, has ridden all the way from Grasse to keep me out of mischief. Please remember that, Count, when you complain of the hardships of the road from Passy."

"Impossible that any road could prove a hardship when you rode upon it, Yvonne," rejoined the young man gallantly. But Madame Fauvalet, whom Yvonne called Louise, hastened to say:

"It was a long journey for so little, monsieur," and her dark eyes seemed to add, "I, too, might be kept out of mischief if occasion offered."

They sat to dinner, and when the first frivolities had passed their conversation turned at once to the Tuileries, and the great events which had there befallen since yesterday. The Count, as one of MacDonald's officers, was a little ready to quarrel

with the universal applause bestowed upon Napoleon's genius.

"You cannot fight when there is no enemy," he said; "we had made up our minds what to do before the news of Lyons reached us. France wished the Emperor's return. She called him back, and he came. We shall now see if this genius is greater than the armies of Europe. I hope that it will be, but I am not yet convinced."

Mademoiselle heard him with a scorn she could not conceal.

"You will see little, Count, if your faith is no greater than that," she responded hotly, and immediately continued with an irony which did not lack sincerity, "Oh, believe me, if France has the courage, there is nothing even for an officer of hussars to fear."

"And the Tuileries will be open to us again," said Madame Louise with a deep sigh of voluptuous satisfaction. "We have been a whole year in the wilderness, my dear. One has almost forgotten what the sound of a man's voice is like."

"Listen to the Count, and you will understand what you have lost, Louise. There will be plenty of men's voices at the Tuileries to-day; all ready to tell the Emperor that they never doubted him. Count Paul told him that a mile from Lyons. I left my friend, Monsieur St. Armand, that he might do so. Oh, yes, we are all believers

when our creed is profitable ; but there are some of us who did not forget it in the wilderness."

Count Paul turned upon her an appealing glance, but he could not arrest the torrent. In truth, he was a very simple young man, quite easy to understand, and absolutely honest ; and such faults as he had were those of his candour. He had not believed that Napoleon could succeed, and he said so, despite the fact that his honesty cost him something of Mademoiselle's esteem. Such a character was rare in Paris at that hour of violent credulity and loud-mouthed partisanship ; but his opinions were those of the great mass of the common people, could they have been learned without dissimulation.

"I have never considered the profit of my creed," was the Count's quiet retort as Yvonne ceased speaking. "Faith is a very good thing, but wisdom and prudence are also estimable. Let us admit that the army has brought the Emperor back. What then ? What comes after ? Three months or six of self-delusion, and then the cataclysm. We have Europe against us. Our troops are mostly raw levies. We want everything—guns, ammunition, commissariat, even coats for our backs. You do not bring these things from the wilderness with you, and what is the good of crying *Vive l'Empereur!* when a million men are marching on your frontier ? Do you think

that this news is not known already to Monsieur de Talleyrand at Vienna? I have not a doubt that it is. The next courier will tell us that Europe is in arms. We shall be fighting in a month, and the issue must be known in three. I am sufficiently a servant of the Emperor to believe that his genius will do more than man has ever done before; but that he will achieve this, I cannot believe. Nevertheless, none will give his life more gladly in such a campaign than I. Even Mademoiselle does not doubt that."

"I do not doubt it," she said, and a gentler light of gratitude illuminated her face as she spoke. "The Emperor's children will know how to die for him. Let it be a better thing, Paul, that they shall know how to live for him, here in Paris, where every moment is precious, and all our hours are his."

In tone, in the sincerity of her faith and her desire to convert others, this was the Yvonne who had ridden to the Châlet of the Broken Rock, and there inspired Bernard with her own magnificent enthusiasm. It had sounded a nobler thing in that solitude, perhaps, and none was quicker than she to mark its incongruity here at the heart of Paris, where all had been won; for, of a sudden and without pause, she changed her mood, and, turning laughingly to St. Armand, intimated that his task would begin to-morrow.

“At the Tuileries at midday; the Emperor will receive you then, Monsieur Bernard.”

“And thank me for riding to Paris at the bidding of my curiosity.”

“Was it nothing more than curiosity?” she asked in a low voice.

“You forbid it to be,” he said as quietly.

Little Madame Louise, chafing under many restraints, resented this heroic school of conversation; and she began to tell them some story of the King’s flight and the scandal which had attended a sudden sounding of the tocsin through the galleries of the Tuileries.

“Mademoiselle Durine heard that the Emperor was in the courtyard, and she did not wait to dress. There was such a screaming in the corridor you could not hear yourself speak. They put her in a coach with the Rector of Saint Roch, and the coachman drove them to St. Denis before they could make him stop. Old Madame Mornac, who is sixty-three and nearly blind, clung to Monsieur de Blaca’s neck, and declared that she would never leave him. Of course, the prettiest girls were first saved. They tell me that the young Duc de Medun galloped away madly with Mademoiselle Claudine, Wagram’s niece, who was to marry Count Olso next week. He told her that the Polish lancers had fired the palace; it was then that the Bishop of Medun ran down the Quai

du Louvre like a schoolboy. They say that a hundred priests are now locked in Notre Dame—the poor martyrs ! ”

“ And you, Louise ? ” Yvonne asked her. “ Are you prepared to immolate yourself upon the altar of destiny ? ”

“ My dear child, when there is no man ready to die for me, I will expire upon the altar of my own *ennui*. Let us hope for the best. Your Emperor is the friend of pretty women. Let the others run away ; we can do without them.”

Her drollery turned the conversation to the new Court, with all its possibilities for those ladies of Paris who had languished in undeserved obscurity during the King's brief reign. It was Mademoiselle's opinion that the officers' wives would be first received, and then dames more robust, whose plebeian story had hitherto shut the gate of the Tuileries upon them. No doubt, she said, there would be great festivities and prodigious hospitality to celebrate the restoration ; but those who hoped for permanent social glories must be quickly disappointed. France must work or perish ; even the women must find their allotted tasks, and drones could have no place in that curriculum.

“ Be sure,” she said, “ the Emperor will soon dismiss the idlers. He himself has begun his task already. There will be no sleep to-night at the

Tuileries ; his generals are with him now, be sure of it."

"And the summons comes even for me," said the Count, as a servant entered the room and told him that an orderly waited in the courtyard, and that his message was urgent.

He bade them a hurried adieu, and soon after the dinner was done Madame Louise made some good excuse of an engagement, and left them to return to her altar of sacrifice. So Bernard and Yvonne were alone at last.

"It appears that I am the idler," he said with a sincerity she could not mistake.

"No," she rejoined, "your task is ready for you, Monsieur Bernard."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SHAME WITHIN THE HOUSE.

THEY had returned to her boudoir ; she drew the curtains close and listened a moment at the head of the great staircase to be sure they were alone. Then she closed the door and, falling upon her knees before the fire of blazing logs, she drew him down beside her, and hand in hand with him, she spoke of his task.

“Dear friend,” she exclaimed, “how glad I am to be alone with you ! Yes, I have said little, Monsieur Bernard, but my heart is very full to-night.”

“Because your task is achieved, Yvonne. Do you think I am less glad because Paris has brought me to your side ? Shall I tell you that I would sooner be your servant here than a master of men in my own country ? You know it, Yvonne ; you know what my heart has to say. There is one secret no woman is ever ignorant of. Shall we speak of that to-night ? ”

Her tenderness, her gentle, winning gestures already scattered Bernard’s logic to the winds, and



"SHE BURIED HER FACE IN HER HANDS."

in passionate words, never commonplace but always sincere, he tried to tell her that he loved her. She did not resist him wholly ; there was a light of pleasure in her eyes, a response, it may be, of her vanity, and even gratitude which counselled patience and some assent when he claimed a full hearing of her ; but that her answer could satisfy him was not to be.

“If I ever gave myself in marriage, Monsieur Bernard,” she said pathetically, “it would be to one whose friendship has been precious to me. But that will never be—never, never ; for his sake, because he loves me, it will never be. My life has its own secrets ; I shall guard them until the end, let the cost be what it may. Be my comrade of the roadside again, and forget that we have spoken : it will be better for us both. I could make no man happy. And you, how should I reward you with unhappiness ? No, no ; you shall be Monsieur Bernard to me always ; and I shall be your little Yvonne, whom you covered with your cloak—oh, so tenderly !—in the old house at Grasse. It cannot be otherwise, dear friend. I wish to God sometimes that it could !”

She buried her face in her hands, and the rich red light from the blazing logs playing upon her bent head gave gold to every soft thread of her silken hair, and showed the pretty figure as that of a child stricken down in trouble and finding

none to comfort her. Bernard had not a doubt then that she loved the Emperor with the wild, uncontrollable love of faith and homage inspired by his victories; and while this cut him to the heart, none the less he could pity and console her.

"You shall always be little Yvonne to me," he said. "Nothing changes a man for whom there is but one woman in all the world. I gave you my friendship at Grasse; it is yours until my life's end to do what you will with it. Let us forget that we have spoken. The years may yet teach us that there is something to come after."

She did not answer him at once, but stood gazing into the fire as though there her inspiration would be found. When next she spoke, it was of the Emperor, ever in her thoughts when men told her that they loved her.

"You were at the Tuileries to-night, Monsieur Bernard."

"Yes, I was there, Yvonne."

"And you saw the end of the Folly."

"I saw a new stage of it."

"Did I not tell you at Grasse how Paris would welcome him?"

"You were a wise prophet, but you said nothing of the others."

"The others? What others do you speak of?"

He told her of the rabble at the Palais Royal—of the drums which had been rolled, and the

pikes which were uplifted, and the cries of revolution he had heard. Her face blanched while he spoke, and her hands trembled when they touched his; but it was not so because she heard of this.

“They are not his enemies,” she exclaimed quickly. “Not from the streets will the peril come. It lies in the houses of those who are his friends; in this house first of all, Monsieur Bernard. They will kill him if they can. There is no other weapon than the poniard left to them. Do you wonder that I wish you to be near me, that I tremble at every sound I hear? Ah, God, if you knew what it meant to me that these things should be planned and done in my father’s house! And yet I know it to be so. They are here with us, unseen, unheard; and I am silent—I must be silent. The Emperor would not permit me to speak of it. I should lose his friendship. His vanity sets him above fear, and he does not believe that any Frenchman would harm him. How can I go to him and say, ‘They will kill you if you give them the opportunity’? He would laugh at those who told him that assassination is the last hope of the King’s friends. And yet it is true; as God hears me I am telling you of things that I have heard and seen this day. And I am helpless and a woman, Monsieur Bernard. There is not one in all Paris whose friendship I have the

right to claim. My very home brings shame upon me."

She ceased abruptly, as though afraid to tell the graver secrets which agitated her. Bernard, upon his part, never questioned her sincerity. He had heard something of this story already in the streets of Paris, where men said boldly that assassination must be the final hope of the Bourbonists, as it was to become the threat of the Republicans. Neither to one nor the other would the Emperor cede a jot of his autocracy. The yelling mobs who rolled the drums and lifted the pikes, these would be crushed beneath an iron heel; the estates of the Royalists would be confiscated, and Madame Mère's family again enriched. Against such an enemy France had but one weapon. The danger was no chimera, to be scoffed at lightly; Napoleon's friends had told him so plainly; and almost the first words of welcome which Fouché spoke were of assassination and its advocates. All this Bernard had heard; but what Yvonne meant by the story of plot and plan in her own house he could not imagine. Apparently she was alone in it save for the presence of a few old servants who appeared devoted to her; nor could he imagine any circumstance which would justify her hysterical outburst.

"You must tell me everything," he said to her, when he had reflected upon her words a little

while. "I cannot advise you until I know of what shame you speak. If it is here, as you say, in your father's house, why do we not meet it face to face? The palace will not listen to generalities; men are not frightened by suppositions. Make me wholly your friend, and I will leave no stone unturned to help you. Have I not claim enough? Do you not owe it to me to do that?"

She looked at him with frightened eyes, uplifted beneath black lashes, which were wet with tears. That he should misunderstand her reticence added something to her heavy trouble.

"To know the shame might be to pay the price of it," she exclaimed hotly. "What concern is it of yours if my brother does this thing? Is it anything to you whether the Emperor or King Louis is at the Tuileries? Nothing—nothing at all. You would act for love of me. Shall I permit that? Indeed, no, since your devotion can never be rewarded. Forget that I have spoken, and be not tempted by a woman, Monsieur Bernard, as one is tempting you now."

Her candour did not disarm him. He liked the honesty of it, while, at the same time, he was much astonished at the news she had unwittingly told him.

"You do not tempt me—far from it," he responded a little coldly. "It may be nothing to me whether the Emperor or another is at the

Tuileries, but your honour is much to me, Yvonne, as it would be to any friend worthy of the name. At least be plain with me. This is the first time that I have heard of your brother being in Paris. Do you mean to say that he is in this house now ? ”

He put the question with some earnestness, but she gave him no immediate answer, seeming to reflect upon it all, and to be greatly troubled by her own indecision. Presently, as though upon a new impulse, she ran to her own room which gave off the boudoir, whence she returned almost immediately with a long cloak which veiled her almost from head to foot.

“ I will show you the shame,” she cried quickly. “ Get your cloak and sword, and follow me. You shall know if I speak of generalities.”

And then suddenly she exclaimed :

“ You could render the Emperor a great service to-night, Monsieur Bernard—the greatest service one man can do another.”

“ Make it known to me,” he said without affection ; and then, “ If you are ready, we will go now.”

She extinguished the candles in the room one by one, and then looked out upon the great stone staircase, dimly lighted by poor oil lamps. The young man Armador, stood at the stairs’ head, and seemed to be listening as though for any sound of footsteps, above or below ; it was not

lost upon Bernard that he had a pistol in his hand, and that it was ready primed, and when Mademoiselle appeared, he whispered a word into her ear, and then drew back into the shadows. She, however, crossing the landing swiftly, opened a door at the far side of it which gave upon a long, unlighted corridor ; and intimating to Bernard the need of silence, she passed down this with light steps, guiding him with a little hand upon his own, and not halting again until an immense leather curtain barred the way and showered the dust of ages upon them as they lifted it. By this they passed into the chapel of the Duke's house, a splendid building in the Italian style, but long neglected and disused, and without evidence of any religious purpose. Here Mademoiselle stood an instant, to be sure that she had come so far undiscovered ; and not until a trained ear spoke of absolute solitude and the very silence of the intenser night, did she venture to address a single word to her companion.

“Not a word, if you value your life,” she whispered suddenly, and upon that she indicated the organ-loft above and the staircase by which it was to be reached.

“Spread your cloak as you go,” she said ; “a step may betray us, and the stairs are old.”

He liked the wit of it—for such a mute to put upon a footstep he had never hitherto thought upon ;

but, guided by her, he set a corner of his velvet cloak upon each step that he climbed, and when they entered the gallery the same device carried him across it without so much as a creaking board to make the heart leap. Nay, Yvonne was upon her hands and knees now, and in that undignified attitude he followed her until they had crossed the gallery, and her hand had lifted a tattered red curtain which hung upon the wall farthest from the organ. Instantly now a glow of white light illumined the time-stained ceiling above them and showed them each other's faces, wan and pale, as in a moment of tense anxiety. Voices, too, were to be heard; the deep tones of men in argument, and ever and anon in jest.

Bernard had take a swift survey of this brief journey, and he understood in some measure where they stood, and to what part of the Hôtel Feyrolles Yvonne had led him. This was the very oldest quarter of the mansion, the farther side of the great quadrangle built in Henry IV.'s day, and long supposed to be uninhabited, as the young man Armador had told him. The room into which he now looked down from a considerable altitude must be the old banqueting hall, wrecked during the Revolution, and but partially restored. He observed that it was lighted by a number of wax-candles set in silver sticks, and that some costly furniture had been carried there and set up at

hazard. A red fire burned upon a vast hearth, and showed the faces of three men sitting at a card-table ; but the game was ended, and while two of the men talked earnestly, the third had fallen asleep and threatened every moment to tumble from his chair. In another corner of the vast room, a young man lay upon a couch, apparently awake yet seeming to wish it otherwise, for he turned restlessly from time to time, and did not answer when one of the others addressed him. By his face, clearly seen in the candle light, and his dress, which was costly and distinguished, Bernard could name the man at once as Yvonne's brother, the Duke of Feyrolles ; and he wondered no longer that she had spoken of the shame within her home. Clearly, some design against Napoleon lay at the bottom of this subterfuge, and was to be discerned both in the Duke's pretended departure from Paris and in the company which now surrounded him. More evil countenances than those of the men at the table it would have been impossible to find in all the city. The fellows had "crime" written across the very swords they carried so easily ; and one of them at least, the burly German, Odo von Ernenstein, was well enough known to the Englishman.

Bernard asked himself no longer at this time why Yvonne had spoken of the personal risk, and why she had tried to hide knowledge of these

things from him. He was perfectly well aware that if these men discovered him, his life would not be worth a moment's purchase. Moreover, the fact that the Duke had permitted him within the Hôtel Feyrolles at all perplexed him, and could in no way be accounted for. What easier than to have shut the gates upon Mademoiselle's friends and taken means to detain her in the house? Yes, said logic, but how much better to cage her friends at the same time, and thus be doubly certain of their silence. Bernard understood that the gates of the house were already locked against him; and, for the rest, the drama being played below was its own answer to all that he would have known.

Who were they, these evil-visaged men who slept and quarrelled and drank by the red fire-light? Did their harsh voices talk that puny treason at which none had scoffed more loudly than the Emperor? Were they mere boasters, preying upon the fears and hopes of the Duke, their master, whose estates would be confiscated to-morrow to the State? Bernard could not answer. The reality of a young girl's fears was not to be tested by any supposition. He could but listen and watch; and for a full hour he remained by Yvonne's side in the gallery scarce daring to draw a full breath or to move his cramped limbs.

Who were the men? Three of them wore

uniforms of cavalry, hussars and lancers of the Guard, and one appeared to be an officer. Were they merely Royalists hiding here from the imagined vengeance of Napoleon? Or had this fanatical Duke, long notorious for his insensate hatred of the Emperor, determined to be the agent of vengeance at which Paris hinted so darkly in the moment of her fears? Bernard believed that the night would show him. A clock in the quadrangle without struck the hour of midnight; the German, Odo von Ernenstein, rose suddenly and went to the door. This, then, was the appointed time.

Now, Mademoiselle had not even uttered a whisper during this intense hour; but when Odo von Ernenstein stood up and the two men disguised as lancers of the Guard rose with him, she touched St. Armand's hand, and spoke in so low a voice that his ear must be held almost to her very lips before he could catch a word of it.

"They are going to the Tuileries," she said. "If they pass the Guard, God help the Emperor!"

"I shall follow them," Bernard answered.

"You cannot follow; every gate will be watched to-night."

"Then I shall go by their gate."

"Impossible! They would kill you."

"Nothing is less certain than life. I cannot stay here. What man could?"

She pressed his hand and pointed to the scene below. The lancers were now putting on their cloaks ; and beneath each cloak there went a poniard, the blade of which glistened in the flickering rays from the now guttering candles. Whispered words passed between the German and the Duke ; but the latter, having roused himself for an instant, turned again on the couch and appeared to sleep. Then the lancers went out, and the third, a younger man in a uniform of hussar, followed them almost immediately, through a great door which appeared to lead almost directly into the gardens of the house. Odo von Ernenstein remaining alone with the Duke, Bernard concluded that this was the appointed time, and he took his sword by the scabbard and rattled it deliberately upon the floor of the gallery ; while to Mademoiselle he said, " Go back as you came, and send Armador to the palace."

For an instant she resisted, as though ashamed to leave him there ; but his wisdom was as obvious as her contemplated folly, and when she had implored him to think of himself first before any other, she ran down the stairs and was gone like a flash of light. The alarm he had given to those in the room below had already brought the Duke to his feet and sent the German's hand to his sword. They listened like two guilty men terrified suddenly by an apparition ; while from a door

which the gallery concealed, a confederate sentinel appeared suddenly, and cried out that the place was watched. St. Armand did not doubt that this fellow had been spying about the other quarters of the house, and that Yvonne had outwitted him upon her journey to the gallery. He stood making his excuses clumsily until the German thrust him aside with an oath, and ran to the tortuous wooden staircase by which you passed from the banqueting hall to the gallery. Climbing this with tremendous steps, he uttered another loud oath when he found the door at the head of it to be locked ; but before he could descend Bernard had swung himself over the parapet, and clasping the wooden pillar which supported the loft, slid lightly to the ground. He had his sword drawn then, and a very devil of purpose laughed aloud at the odds which confronted him ; nay, for that, surprise was a better ally than cold steel, and the young hussar he first confronted could do little more than gape and smirk, as though this were a jest which he found to his liking ; while the Duke did not speak a single word, but watched the apparition as though it were more than merely human. With the huge German, resourceful only in a measure of brute strength, the issue remained. No sooner did he see St. Armand than he came headlong down the stairs, roaring like a bull that has been pricked ; while, inspired by him, the young hussar at

length drew his sword and rushed upon the enemy.

Bernard possessed all the trained Englishman's coolness in affray which was so characteristic of his nation at that day; and this double assault in no way confused him. A clever eye said that he must deal with the hussar before the German came upon him, and so, almost leisurely, he turned upon the young soldier and received that impetuous attack upon a blade that had been named the subtlest and most sure in all England. A splendid feint in octavo and a thrust in sixte found six inches of steel in the youth's right shoulder; and he, crying out with pain, reeled back fainting upon the bare wooden floor. The thrust was not an instant too soon. A great sword whistled in the air almost as soon as it was delivered; and but for the rapid step with which St. Armand followed up his antagonist, would have cleaved his skull where he stood. He turned in the same instant, and snatching up a heavy silver candelabrum from the table, he felled the German as an ox is felled by an axe; and the man went to the ground without a word or cry. And thus it befell that St. Armand stood in the narrow street behind the great house almost before he realised how sure his aim had been.

To the Tuileries, to stand between the Emperor and the assassins! Yes, that he knew to be his

purpose. But how if they planned their assassins' part elsewhere, in the streets of Paris, in the theatre, in the parks? He knew not what to do, and set off blindly, as a man who gropes his way in the dark to an unknown goal.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE PONT DE LA CONCORDE.

HAD the men gone to the Tuileries, or had they turned aside? Were the three together, or had they separated? These questions came instantly to his mind as he entered a narrow passage which ran the whole length of the great house, and brought him out once more into the broad Faubourg St. Germain.

Let him go straight to the palace, and what then? He could see the Captain of the Guard—but what of his tale? Would they believe it, or answer that the same story had been told every day since Napoleon set out from Elba? Better far to follow these men, if it could be, and track them to any house which might harbour them. This was in his mind when he cast his eyes up and down the Faubourg for some sign which should guide him to his goal. The great street, however, appeared to be absolutely deserted at that hour. The magic of Napoleon's name had already sent its aristocrats running like rabbits towards the frontier. The lacqueys remained, sound asleep in

their beds, and caring not a jot whether King or Emperor ruled.

Bernard took a swift survey, right and left, up and down the Faubourg ; and, being unrewarded, he determined to make for the Tuileries, and there share his knowledge with someone in authority. General Cambronne had been very friendly to him upon the road to Grenoble. He knew that there would be no sleep in the palace to-night ; and he set out with a new hope of the venture which the clear air and his own good courage inspired. At the worst he might warn the authorities whose business it was to protect the Emperor within the capital ; he knew that Savary and Fouché were already at the Tuileries, each named as the new Chief of Police, and willing listeners, he felt sure, to such a tale as this.

He determined to see the Duke of Otranto without a moment's delay, and glad of a definite purpose, he quickened his steps as the lights upon the river bridge came to his view ; and he was upon the point of crossing to the old Place de la Concorde, when a voice suddenly called him to halt, and turning at the summons, he found himself face to face with one of the lancers who had but just quitted Mademoiselle's house. At the same moment the point of a naked sword touched his throat, and he knew that a single maladroit word would be his last.

“Why do you follow us, monsieur ? ”

“Let me see who you are, and I will tell you whether I follow you or not.”

“That will not serve you. Were you not at the Hôtel Feyrolles to-night ? ”

“Absolutely so. Do you grudge me the Duke’s confidence ? ”

“The Duke’s confidence ? ”

“And why not, monsieur, since I am an Englishman ? ”

“But you came with Mademoiselle—at nine o’clock. Our information is not to be questioned.”

“Allow me to say that if it begins and ends there, it is very much to be questioned. I was the Duke’s guest three days ago.”

Bernard wondered at his own audacity. Here he stood with the cold steel at his very windpipe, telling these men a half-truth which might at any moment betray him ; and yet he was as absolutely unconscious of fear as ever he had been in all his life. It may have been that the very intensity of the danger asked of his faculties their readiest wit and supremest self-possession ; it may have been that his naked sword, carried under his cloak, inspired him once more with the confidence of a master’s skill. In either case, his quick eyes followed every changing expression upon the lancer’s face, and he seemed to read each thought as though it were spoken aloud.

“ You were the Duke’s guest three days ago, monsieur ? Then how came it that we heard no mention of your name ? ”

“ That question were better put at the Hôtel Feyrolles. You ignore the circumstance that a man may wish to keep his friends apart, or may not trust some of them wholly, monsieur.”

“ Ha ! You would say that he is playing false with us ? ”

“ By no means. I would say that he is as good a scoundrel as any of you.”

For an instant—for just one—the young man’s surprise had robbed him of his vigilance. The menacing blade had been lowered, the threat forgotten. When recollection returned, a blade, flashing like silver upon his own, punished its tardiness with dramatic suddenness ; for at the very first pass he cried out like a stricken animal, and reeled back, dizzy and bleeding, to the pavement.

“ Help me ! My God, Lucien ! ”

The words were broken by a deep gasp ; he cried lamentably to the friend by his side, who had already unsheathed his poniard and now stabbed viciously at the Englishman ; but that friend was powerless to help him. A swift, darting thrust cut the hand which held the poniard at the wrist ; the weapon went clattering from his grasp, and crying “ Assassin ! ” with all his lungs,

the newcomer bolted headlong toward the Champ de Mars and the open fields.

A chill, which was neither wholly fear nor wholly regret, ran through Bernard's veins as he stooped over the still breathing man, and asked if he would live or die. He had no greater quarrel with this lad than he had had with the young Earl of Anandale, who fell to his sword on the sward of Hyde Park more than three years ago. And yet in both cases he believed that justice had been done, and that his own conscience would acquit him of guilt in the act. Raising the youth tenderly, he looked about him for aid ; and espying a wayfarer who loitered upon the opposite pavement and seemingly had appeared from the very skies, so silent was his step, he called him to come over in the name of charity. The man, however, ran away at the first sound of a voice, and, terrified lest he should be drawn into the brawl, he disappeared at lightning speed in the darkness of the Faubourg.

Bernard had held wounded men in his arms before that night, but that this wound should be of his own doing agitated him greatly. By what right had he, a stranger, interfered in this conspiracy, or assumed so readily the guilt of those in Yvonne's house ? Her fears might have been a woman's fears, lightly conceived and in part unjustified. And yet, he said, as he staunched the

bleeding vein and loosened the cloak about the young man's neck, all the actions of those in the banqueting hall had been the acts of guilty men, hiding from the light and answering suspicion with the sword's point. His own regret was the regret of pity, which could look upon this maimed fellow-creature and remember that he was well and whole three minutes ago. Bernard breathed again more freely when it seemed to him that the lad might live in spite of it.

An impulse of generosity toward a foe made him resolve to shield the youth from justice; and he was planning how this might be done when he heard a step upon the pavement, and looking up, he perceived an old priest hurrying towards him, as though perfectly aware of that which had happened, and of the need for his own offices. Indeed, for that, the old man knelt at once by the youth's side and began his offices; and not until he had absolved him did he say why he had come.

"I am from the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas, monsieur," he said at last. "Some of my brethren are following me here. We shall take this youth to the hospital. You will not forbid us an act of our common charity?"

"I—I forbid you nothing, father. Take the lad to your house by all means. No doubt you have already heard something of the story?"

“A stranger called me. He was here when this unhappy young man fell. Of course, I ask nothing. You are the judge of your own acts, monsieur, and I perceive are now animated by some motive of mercy. Let us remember the bitter hostilities of men in these dangerous days, and pray God that peace may come upon the earth. I hear my brethren approaching; let it be well that I am found alone.”

The message needed no interpretation. This stranger who had run to the church for help was the youth's confederate. The priests, it may be, were perfectly well aware how and why he had fallen; but their animosity against the Emperor made them the ally of any who would strike at his power; and they would shield this lad from justice willingly enough. He himself was glad that it should be so; and with a last look at the young face upon which the mask of death seemed to have come, he bade the priest good-night, and hurried across the bridge.

Three assassins, if such they were, had made good their escape from the Hôtel Feyrolles, and two had been brought to bay at the Pont de la Concorde. Where, then, was the third? Had he made such use of his time that the Tuileries already sheltered him? It were possible, and, being possible, the worst madness might have befallen in the moments of delay. Bernard now pressed on as

though the very minutes were making history while he walked. He knew that ironic destiny might yet call him to save the Emperor from that peril of which Paris had spoken so freely in these days of debauch.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GOLDEN BEES.

THERE had been silence and sleep upon the southern bank of the river ; but once you had crossed the bridge, Paris was wide awake enough, and her loud voice still spoke of the wonders of the night. Though it was long after midnight, mounted men still went at a gallop from the barracks to the Tuileries, and back again from the Tuileries to the barracks, as though speed and fire were necessary to the drama of the hour. From the palace itself a blaze of light shone out, and countless windows starred the blacker curtain of the fabric and betrayed its moving throngs of wise men come to this new worship of Napoleon. In the courtyards the Old Guard bivouacked and refused to pass on. He was there, Corporal Violet ; those walls hid him from them ; but he had come to his own again ; and to-morrow he would lead them to new worlds and new victories. How should they sleep when this story was to be told ?

Men told you that the Emperor had been almost lifted up the grand staircase of the Tuileries, and

carried like a child that would sleep in the sanctuaries of his home. His hands had been outstretched, his eyes half-closed, the curl upon his forehead tousled and disarranged. A hundred hands strove to touch the hem of his garments; his ears caught the ejaculations of joy and welcome, some earnest, some fanatical, many mere lip-service, which would be denied as readily should the need be. The bravest soldiers of France, the shrewdest statesmen, elbowed the time-servers, the charlatans, and the hypocrites in that medley. Women vied with men in prostrating themselves before him; women who had torn the Royal emblems from their frocks but yesterday, and had given this day to the needles which wrought the Golden Bees. The great staircase up which they swarmed so fiercely, was it not a Jacob's ladder leading to the paradise of Imperial favour and amorous rewards? Let the King come back—what mattered? The bees might go to the hive then; and none would punish women because the bees had swarmed.

They carried Napoleon to his cabinet, but none supposed he would sleep, or that any man would bethink him of rest this night. So much must be done; so much planned that the very clocks which chimed the hours were as enemies to loyal service. And what a meeting it was, in that room from which old Louis, the King, had fled but a few days

ago ! Why, his very papers still littered it ; the Royal hat still hung upon the Royal peg ; the sacred bed was still as the sanctified body had left it. And men could laugh at these things as they heard the story of headlong flight and princely boasts, and the mad scamper towards the frontier of those who had sworn to bring in the "brigand" at the cart's tail. Old Marshal Ney could tell you most about this ; but he held himself a little apart to-night, for the shadow of the apostacy lay heavy upon him, and he had been loudest among the boasters. Let it be left to Fouché to recount the flight ; to Carnot to speak of the Chambers ; to Davoust to protest that he would not become Minister of War ; to Savary to swear that nothing should make a policeman of him. The Emperor, usually such a master of concentration, could not deal separately with these to-night. No, they were all his children, and this was the great home-coming. Time enough when the sun rose to set each his task and bid him speed upon it. The night was for rejoicing—the most wonderful night, it may be, that the palace of the Tuileries had ever witnessed.

Here, then, was the state of things when Bernard St. Armand boldly passed the gates toward one o'clock of the morning, and demanded to see General Cambronne, or, if not General Cambronne, then the officer of the Guard. His earnest manner,

it may be, impressed the sentinel at the gate, for he summoned a sergeant, and the sergeant called a captain, who laughed openly when he heard that the affair was of importance.

“There is but one important affair to-night,” he said lightly. “However, you shall see the General, monsieur, and help to keep us awake.”

They entered the palace together and passed up the great staircase. Orderlies lounged upon many of the sofas in the corridors above, and the open doors of ante-chambers showed the ladies of the Golden Bees chattering already to the officers of the staff and the younger heroes of the march. St. Armand’s impression was that of a palace crowded to excess, of brilliant gowns and flashing accoutrements, and the superb uniforms of Napoleon’s army. Everywhere the talk was incessant and deafening; and the young captain found himself shouting like a drill-sergeant at those of whom he would ask news of General Cambronne. In despair at last, he left Bernard in a little cabinet at the very end of the corridor, and there inquired what message he should carry to the General.

“Say that I come from the Hôtel Feyrolles on a matter which will not brook delay.”

The captain laughed again.

“Had you named the house at once I should have understood you better,” said he; and then

as an afterthought, "No doubt Mademoiselle is waiting supper for him."

Bernard would have made a hot retort, but the fellow quitted the room upon his words ; and, after all, it was but a jest to be employed as often as the name of Yvonne de Feyrolles came to men's lips. Such a vagrant seeker after fortune could scarcely win the sedate recognition of that army she had followed so recklessly both to Elba and thence to Paris. Just as she appeared to be, so would men name her ; and much as one man might deplore the circumstance, he realised the uselessness of complaint. For the immediate moment, it was task enough to choose those words in which Marshal Cambronne must be informed of the events which had happened at Yvonne's house, and be warned that some infamy was abroad, and might even then lie within the palace gates. His difficulty lay in the limitations which the circumstances imposed upon him—both that he should conceal nothing material, and yet save the Duke's name if that were possible. He realised that the mission must prove difficult enough, and would well have left it to another now that he stood face to face with it.

The young man in the hussar's uniform, who had gone from the Hôtel with the others—had he entered the palace upon a subterfuge, or was the appointed hour not yet ? Bernard, with all his

British stoicism, did not disguise from himself the plain truth that if the Royalists in Paris wished to assassinate the Emperor, the crime might readily be accomplished by any daring man who did not shrink from its penalty. Let the hussar's uniform give him admittance to the ante-rooms, and the wearer would meet the Emperor face to face had he but patience enough. Napoleon's very contempt for regicides must help the dastards who spoke openly of the poniard in the streets of Paris. And this youth who had been with the others at the Hôtel Feyrolles——

Someone turned the handle of the door, and looking up quickly as the thread of his thoughts snapped, Bernard perceived upon the threshold the very last man he would have expected to find in such a place. He was no other than the young hussar himself, smiling, and evidently well-pleased. And he came forward as one who had the Englishman's secret, and did not hesitate to confess his knowledge.

“Monsieur St. Armand!” he exclaimed. “So you were here before me, after all.”

Bernard gazed at him open-mouthed.

“Since I do not know the hour of your arrival,” he began—— But the young man crossed the room, and laying a hand upon his arm, he said :

“The German, Odo, is in the Conciergerie ; the Duke rides for the frontier. It is the

Emperor's wish that no word of this story be told in Paris; nevertheless, you will not remain ignorant of his gratitude, monsieur. I have told him of your courage at the Pont de la Concorde, and he is not insensible of it. Be pleased to follow me, for his Majesty is waiting to see you now."

He turned to quit the room, but an ejaculation of amazement restrained him, and he delayed to answer the almost involuntary question addressed to him.

"Oh, yes," he said; "I am Pierre Lescot, in the service of the police. The men you saved us the trouble of hanging are the Chevalier du Cerceau and Androult Sarazin, pleasant impostors both, but little likely to slit anything more valuable than the purse of the miserable Duke they impose upon. We were warned this morning by Mademoiselle Yvonne of the meeting which was to take place at the Hôtel Feyrolles. Of course, I had others about the building, and there was no necessity to risk a scratch in the matter. Those men were going to their beds when you followed them, Monsieur St. Armand. You owe your life to a good sword, for they would certainly have murdered you."

Bernard asked him but one more question.

"Since you were warned, I do not understand why Mademoiselle de Feyrolles needed my help," he exclaimed.

The young man answered as one who might be jesting.

“Perhaps she wished to bring you to the notice of the Emperor,” he said with a smile. “Come; his Majesty is waiting for us.”

Bernard made no reply. They left the ante-room, and returning down the long corridor, entered the Emperor’s apartments in the very centre of it. His Majesty, an equerry said, waited for Monsieur St. Armand. Bernard went to him with a beating heart. Assuredly Fortune stretched out her hand to him this night, and Fortune was a woman.’

CHAPTER XIX.

COUNT ST. ARMAND.

THE Emperor had been dictating a proclamation to the citizens of Paris when Bernard St. Armand was announced ; and he continued to the end with no other recognition than a gesture of the hand which counselled patience. The room was of considerable size, being known as the Grand Cabinet du Roi, and its furniture reflected those personal comforts which Louis XVIII. studied so assiduously. Magnificent writing tables with Watteau panels ; gorgeous chairs in gilt and white tapestry ; fantastic clocks and candelabra gave an air of splendour which art redeemed from vulgarity. A newly-painted portrait of the unhappy Louis XVI. hung above the mantel ; there were busts of great French generals in the corners, and some fine Oriental metal-work upon certain of the smaller tables. The room was lighted sparsely by shaded candles, and a heavy Indian carpet muted the footsteps of the Emperor as he paced it.

The young officer of police, Pierre Lescot, had left Bernard alone at the door of this Cabinet,

and, familiar as the Englishman was with Courts and their etiquette, this historic scene embarrassed him not a little. A man of slow and somewhat stolid emotions, he could not fail, nevertheless, to be conscious of the magnetism of the presence in which he stood or of the stupendous genius which alone made that audience possible.

Here, so close to him that an outstretched hand could have touched the epaulettes upon the shoulder, was the conqueror of the Western world, the master of kings, the human Moloch, to whom millions of the children of Europe had been sacrificed—this the voice which had scattered the fabulous armies, robbed mothers of their sons, and dowered the kingdoms with desolation! Monarchs had prostrated themselves before this puny figure in the dark green coat; governments had abased themselves at his feet; cities had welcomed him; the greatest and the lowest had bent the knee to him. And to-night, he, who had been named as for ever outcast, the figure of a lost cause, the whipped monster, the de-crowned parvenu, here from the palace he dictated that appeal to his soldiers which once more should open the flood-gates of his ambition and pour a stream of death and blood upon the placid fields of Europe. Was such a man as other men? Did their common human nature animate even the least of his acts? St. Armand watched him as he would have watched

a vision of the unknown mysteries. The voice thrilled him, the eyes magnetised him ; he followed every gesture with a fascination he could not describe.

There were six altogether with the Emperor in the Cabinet, and of these four were Generals, the fifth Monsieur Carnot, who had just consented to take up the portfolio of the Ministry of War. Conspicuous among the little group stood Marshal Cambronne, then in low and earnest talk with the "bravest of the brave," the redoubtable Ney, twice apostate, but about to pay for his apostacy with his life before many months had passed. Gourgaud, complaining and always jealous, sat with Count Bertrand in a far corner of the apartment ; but Monsieur Carnot stood by the writing-table at which a young aide-de-camp endeavoured to set down the torrent of words which flowed from Napoleon's lips. These, indeed, poured forth in an unbroken, if often turbulent, stream ; and the emphasis accorded to them, the animated and unnecessary gestures indicated forcibly the emotions which dictated them. For that matter, the Emperor had scarcely ceased to talk with almost hysterical fluency since he entered the Tuileries. No food had passed his lips ; the hot bath, invariably prepared for him, had become cold long since ; and still he talked—of his success, of his aims, of the means whereby he would break up

the coalition among the Allies, of the reconstitution of his army, of the Chambers and their sittings—a terrible sermon, in its way expressing every phase of that unquenchable excitement which attended victory and would not contemplate defeat. To St. Armand, the greater surprise was this, that he should have been summoned at such an hour, and, being summoned, should also be admitted. He had yet to know and value justly that unsurpassable insight which judged a man instantly and, having judged him, wrote the name indelibly upon the mind. To-night he could but wonder and be amazed.

The Emperor finished his dispatch to the last line, and having addressed a few words to Carnot, and visited the table to sign the portentous document, he presently said something to Marshal Ney, and, smiling at the answer, he crossed the room abruptly, and stood almost rudely before St. Armand, looking him up and down with the piercing grey eyes and posing almost as one who has an accusation to make. Bernard did not flinch at the glance. He had been trained in the school of courtiers, and was well able to hold his own in any company.

“So you have come to Paris, my son?”

“As you observe, sire, I have come to Paris.”

The Emperor smiled, as though some pleasant thought animated him.

"Yes," he said, "we have heard of your arrival, Monsieur St. Armand, and of the way you have been amusing yourself since you came here. At the Hôtel Feyrolles, was it not, and afterwards upon the Pont de la Concorde? You see how quickly such news travels. To-morrow it will be a meeting with our friend Navarren. Be advised by me, my friend, and have nothing to do with pretty women who are about to become other men's wives."

Bernard stepped back and looked the Emperor full in the face. He scarcely understood him; or, if he understood him, then the meaning was that Yvonne must marry Navarren. Such an intimation came like a thunderclap. Napoleon laughed at his very surprise.

"So you do not like our good advice," he continued presently. "You are not pleased to hear that the little adventuress is to have a husband. Then we will talk of something else, if you please—of your work in England, to begin with."

He motioned to Bernard to place himself at his side, for he had grown restless again, and beginning to pace the room with measured step, he went to the heart of things at once with a question concerning the English artillery and the foundries which cast it.

"You were with Bolton's artillery, I remember," he said, taking up their talk at Grasse almost

with the sentence which had ended it. "Did you learn anything during your service of the way in which cannon are founded?"

"I made it my business, sire, to study every detail of my profession."

"A wise man; it is the detail which men call genius. Could you organise and establish an arsenal here in Paris if I put the men and the money at your disposal?"

"I have no doubt that I could, sire, since I have already done it in England."

"I remember that you have. Your name was known to me five years ago as that of the most promising officer of artillery in your country. When I ask myself how best I can employ you, and recognise your loyalty"—he laid an especial emphasis upon the words—"I think naturally of that vocation for which you have already shown much aptitude. It is in my mind to establish new arsenals both at St. Denis and at Vincennes, monsieur. Do you feel able to undertake the responsibility for them?"

"I should rejoice to serve your Majesty in that capacity."

The Emperor smiled.

"It will be hard work," he said; "almost as hard, Count, as sword exercise upon the Pont de la Concorde."

And then he touched Bernard's arm lightly again.

“I know of that,” he exclaimed, “and I do not forget the friendship of my friends. Permit me also to remember that your forefathers were counts of France. You will go to Vincennes to-morrow, and your task will begin. I rely upon that energy and cleverness which made your name famous in England, and will make it great in France. We shall find you quarters at the École. You must be much among your brother officers, and show them what English perseverance is like. There is a great deal of work to be done, and very little time in which to do it. I will speak with you to-morrow upon the particular nature of the undertaking with which I shall entrust you—let me see, at eleven o’clock at the École I shall expect you to come to me. You will be gazetted by then, and you can spend the time in ordering your kit and uniform. A better business this, Count, than running after little headstrong ladies who are about to be married. Let me send an officer with you, and he will find you quarters in the palace to-night. I am told that you English sleep for ten hours; I have never slept more than six, and there have been forty hours together when I have not slept at all. That is my temperament, but I envy others who are different. So much is a matter of temperament—religion, habit, success, failure. A man rarely alters by resolution. He is from the beginning unchangeable——”

Thus, flashing from subject to subject, with scarce a breath between them, he ran on over a gamut of ideas, suggestions, and commands. Bernard, amazed at the intimacy, astounded at the title conferred upon him so delicately, listened with a fascination which needed no deep understanding to explain. Chiefly, perhaps, the apparent simplicity of this genius won upon his admiration. Here was a man who could dwell one instant upon the technicalities of a material art, then turn instantly to some wide view of a European question which had perplexed and baffled a decade of politicians. A very master of organisation, he would speak in one sentence of the means whereby the Czar should be alienated from Metternich; in the next he would dictate some crisp and comprehensive directions for the establishment of the new arsenals which were to provide him with cannon to destroy the Allies. Not for an instant did the superb energy flag or the voice grow weary. He was wide awake while the weary Marshals nodded, and the tired secretary prayed in his heart that the Bourbons would return and snatch the pen from his aching fingers. Alone of all in the room, Bernard had the air of a man who is husbanding the golden grain of the greatest thinker of his age.

“To-morrow—or shall we say at eleven o’clock to-day?” were his concluding words, as he detected

the sleepy Carnot preparing to take his departure. "I have much to do, and it must be eleven. Perhaps we will breakfast at the École if my marshals can keep awake so long. Ask our friend Cambronne to find you a lodging, Count ; he will keep you from the Pont de la Concorde and the pretty adventuress. Sleep the English sleep, and let me find you well to-morrow."

He nodded rather than bowed, and turned again toward the yawning secretary, while Bernard found himself out in the corridor with the amiable Cambronne, who complained bitterly of the night and its events, chiefly because they had robbed him of his supper.

"He will kill himself in a week if this goes on," was the good-humoured Marshal's lament. "There is no need for the assassins to be busy. Oh, yes, Count, the story of your adventure has been told to him, believe me. But it is always useless ; you cannot convince him that the man has been born who will lift a hand against him. In a measure, he admires your zeal, and has said so. You will not go without your reward ; but I am glad you made no mention of the story. It would have wounded his vanity, and he likes silent men. The Duke of Feyrolles should be whipped with a birch ; he is just the lunatic to plan such madness, and then to turn upon his instruments. I, myself, believe that you have done a greater

service to the Emperor than any of us imagines. We shall never know. At least you will profit by it, and profit in the service of Napoleon Bonaparte means much, as you can understand."

Bernard did not think it necessary to deny that personal advantage was in his mind when he quitted the Hôtel Feyrolles. Perhaps his thoughts turned chiefly upon Yvonne and the manner in which she had been spoken of at the palace. His interest compelled him to name her to the Marshal, and he was astonished to meet with a sympathetic response.

"Yvonne," said the Marshal—for no soldier called her by any other name—"Yvonne is a product of our times. Her misfortune is her sex. As a man she would have been the adventurer of her age. I admit that she is passionately devoted to the Emperor, with a devotion not common among adventuresses. Possibly you have already experienced her powers of deception. She uses men as other people use their pens to write, each his page for her, and then to pass on. I thought that she would have married the Count of Foix last year. We all thought it. But the young man burnt his fingers at the Royal fire, and that's the end of him. She saved him from disgrace; she is a staunch friend, I admit, but a man with one eye could see how things go with her, and—well, his Majesty is getting a little too old for flirtations, as may have occurred to you."

Bernard admitted that the facts were obvious ; but the admission found him with a heavy heart.

“ He speaks of Navarren and her approaching marriage. I cannot reconcile the story with the events of to-night. These people are very real enemies of the Imperial idea, and will not be bought by the gift of a wife. Besides, Yvonne is not the woman to be given unless inclination goes with the bargain. It may be that his Majesty was not serious.”

“ That is quite possible. He has such a contempt for human nature that nothing pleases him better than to strike a jarring note upon a likely instrument. On the other hand, there are most excellent reasons why he should marry her to Navarren. The Marquis could bring over a powerful party which would be invaluable in the dispute which must arise over the promised Constitution. Feyrolles may be a madman, but he would hardly plot mischief against his pugnacious brother-in-law. The business would suit the Emperor altogether. I am more than sanguine that it will come to pass.”

“ Mademoiselle not being consulted in the matter ? ”

“ There is no necessity. She must either submit or be banished from Paris.”

“ And you do not think that she would submit to banishment sooner than marry a man abhorrent to her ? ”

“My dear Count, while his Majesty is at the Tuileries, Yvonne de Feyrolles would go through fire and water to be near him.”

Bernard made no answer. They had come by this time to an immense apartment upon the second floor of the palace; and here a heterogeneous company of aides-de-camp, officers, ushers, and other functionaries was encamped for the night as men upon a merry picnic which to-morrow would terminate. Some, rolled up in their cloaks, slept without complaint upon the floor; others lay more snugly upon historic sofas; a few sat about a table and made what supper they could from honest bread and priceless wine which the Royal cellars had furnished. But all were excited and full of talk, and the sleepers complained bitterly of the hubbub.

“We can do no better for you to-night,” said the Marshal, as he conducted Bernard to the place. “You will have your own apartment at the École to-morrow. I wish you pleasant dreams, Count. Yonder is Monsieur Lescot, whom you know already, I think.”

They parted upon the words, and Bernard, too fatigued to desire company, drew apart from the others, and finding a corner which no sleeper occupied, he rolled himself up in his cloak and tried to shut the discordant sounds from his weary ears.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TASK.

THE Arsenal at Vincennes, to the command of which an Imperial *Gazette* named the Count of St. Armand, began its work seven days after the Emperor's return to Paris. From that moment the vast army of workmen which swarmed about the forges, battered the huge masses of molten metal and cast the shells which were to destroy the armies of Europe, scarcely rested by day or night. Had they needed an incentive, the Emperor's presence among them would have served to inspire them. He came at all hours—a grey figure passing swiftly in the golden light of forges; and never did he quit the great building without a word of gracious appreciation of the man who controlled that splendid organisation, and by his genius made it doubly fruitful.

“Your country has lost a great officer,” he would say to Bernard; “they will know it some day when I teach them the lesson. I do not forget that your forefathers served French kings. You cannot sell your birthright; I forbid you to do so.

If all will work as these people are working, we shall be in Vienna before the autumn. I shall make you a Grand Master of Artillery and a Marshal; it will be your answer to your enemies in London."

Six months ago Bernard would not have believed that words such as these could have meant so much to him. For the merely nominal distinctions which had already been conferred upon him, he cared little. It was nothing to him that he should carry, here in Paris, the title which his forefathers had borne at the courts of French kings; he had no greed of the money which the Emperor lavished upon him so generously; but the personal gratitude of the man he prized beyond words. To be of service to the greatest military genius of his age or any age; to be one of the devoted band wrestling with the Fate which closed about the throne; scarcely to eat or sleep that the Emperor's work might be done—this was an awakening indeed, the fulfilment of Yvonne's prophecy as he had never dreamed that it might be fulfilled.

He was a great organiser, so much his enemies had always admitted. An ardent soldier in the old days, he had so studied his profession that no detail of it was beyond him. Nor could he fail to wonder at the shrewdness which had placed him in a position he was so well able to occupy. Here no one might charge him that he warred upon the

country of his birth. He would not be asked to take up arms against the English, even then gathering at Brussels for the mighty combat which should decide Napoleon's fate for ever. His duty lay rather in a faithful service which, perhaps, he could perform better than any other man in Paris. And he performed it earnestly, assiduously, as a slave who would not be freed until the master himself should have won freedom.

So we find him, clad in the roughest clothes, hither, thither, amidst the furnaces and the clanging hammers. News from the Paris of intrigue and politics rarely came to him amid the thunder of sounds by which he was surrounded. If he reflected upon the bygone months, it was to recall the Châlet of the hills, and to remember the despair of the life he had lived therein. A dreamer no more, his soul responded to the mighty influences which the master could bring to bear upon it—and he to whom the name of Napoleon had been a by-word became a worshipper, the ardour of whose devotion was surpassed by none. He did not complain that destiny had so dealt with him. The ambition of achievement ran hot in his veins, and he counted the days until he could say, "The fires burn no more; the task is accomplished."

This complete abandonment to a welcome pursuit had been, perhaps, not a little due to his necessary recognition of the hopelessness of his

passion for Yvonne de Feyrolles, and of his determination to stifle that passion by the ardour of his work. A philosopher in his creed toward women, the Emperor's words at the Tuileries had brought him face to face with the plain truths of his position, and shown him clearly the folly of his hopes. This winsome girl, attractive in her very genius for intrigue, human in her sympathies, making that tender appeal to him which is rarely made by more than one woman to one man, what wisdom, he asked, sent him to her house at the moment when Navarren was named for her husband and Napoleon for her lover? If he believed her innocent, he knew that the world did not share his belief; but this was less to him than the humiliation her acts had put upon him. Pride helped him to resolve that he would see her no more. If she had need of him, he knew that her summons would reach him; and when the weeks passed and it did not come, then he said that the evil tongues spake the truth, and that she was the Emperor's servant indeed.

Bernard had few friends in Paris, nor did he seek them. Marshal Cambronne asked him to dinner from time to time—he was once the guest of the Chief of Staff, Marshal Soult; and he saw much of the Duke of Otranto, the redoubtable Fouché, already trying to sell Napoleon to the highest bidder. Society, however, he avoided, and such

gossip as came to him he got from the newspapers and the mess-table. True, the Emperor pressed him often to come to the Tuileries, and he went there once, hoping, it may be, in spite of his resolution, that he would see Yvonne; but she was not there, and for the rest, the ogling women and the office-seekers at their feet, he had nothing but contempt. This Paris which laughed and feasted so joyously, how long would she laugh and feast in the shadow of the Eagles? He knew that the days of peace were few; and in the silent intervals he seemed to hear the war-drums rolling already in his anxious ears.

He had written to Yvonne twice since the forgotten night at her house, and he had received two brief notes from her—one rejoicing at the honours which had been conferred upon him; the other imploring him to believe none of the stories told of her until she should tell him the truth with her own lips. This latter note he could not reconcile with the events which were known to him and the happenings at the Tuileries as eye-witnesses recorded them. That Navarren had returned to Paris was a fact beyond dispute; and Bernard heard with amazement that he had been a guest at the Hôtel Feyrolles, and had brought the Duke with him. Such a master-stroke upon the Emperor's part he could well understand—for Navarren carried many of the old nobility in

his train ; but Yvonne's action in remaining at the house perplexed him sorely. It must be true, then, that she had consented to become this man's wife ; and if she had consented, what other reason could be found than the cloak of marriage, with its greater freedom for higher intrigues ? He knew not what to believe or think ; and the swiftly-passing weeks but magnified his perplexity. When, at last, they told him that she was to marry Navarren within ten days, he had been long prepared for the news. None the less, the blow fell heavily. He did not go to the Arsenal that day or the next, and the second night found him the prisoner of his own room at the École Militaire.

It was to this room close upon the hour of nine o'clock that an orderly came with a message from the Emperor himself, summoning him immediately to the Tuileries. Bernard remembered as he read it that this was the occasion of the great military reception—the second which had been held since the return—and curious to know why a summons had reached him at such a time, he donned his uniform and set out for the palace.

Would Yvonne be there, and with her the man she had so greatly derided upon the road to Paris ? The story seemed beyond belief incredible. And yet she permitted it to be told, and the salons had echoed it, and the men had spoken of her

cleverness and the supreme devotion of her sacrifice. Bernard said that he would meet her face to face, and hear the truth from her own lips. Then he remembered that she was a woman, and he laughed aloud that he should have spoken of truth.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE INTERVIEW.

THE great galleries of the Tuileries were aglow with colour when Bernard entered the Throne Room ; to which it seemed that every well-known soldier in Paris had come to protest his loyalty in an hour of crisis. Field-m Marshals, generals of division, Ney, Soult, Bertrand, Cambronne, Gourgaud—lesser staff-officers, lancers, hussars, dragoons, swarmed the vast apartments and contributed each his quatum to the blaze of light and the radiant glitter. The women, not a whit behind in their contribution to the kaleidoscopic picture, were those whom the Imperial summons had called from the dolours of exile to the wit, the notoriety, and the opportunities of the most Republican court in Europe. Scarce one among them who was not the subject of intrigue or undisguised amour ; they aired their fascinations as those who were ashamed of no discovery and afraid of no tongue. To them it mattered nothing that the enemy stood at the gate and that the final issue was at hand. Let

the merry weeks console them ; at least they might hope for victory.

Bernard passed through the rooms swiftly, carrying his nationality as one who knew that his countrymen were the most dreaded foes of this new social order. He was not yet accustomed to hear himself called Count St. Armand ; nor did the flattery of the soldiers quite please him when it promised a victory over the English which should owe something to his zeal. He had come there to see his master, the Emperor, for whom these babbling hordes waited so patiently ; and putting aside any other object but that, he went straight to the Marshal of the Palace, and declared his errand. The answer was immediate and satisfactory.

“His Majesty is awaiting you,” said the Marshal. “I am instructed that you are to see him without delay.”

He led the way without further word to the private apartments, and being admitted at once, Bernard discovered the Emperor pacing his cabinet with restless steps and a manner which betokened considerable perturbation. As ever, a weary secretary wrestled with the impassioned words which fell from the eloquent lips, and caught as many of them upon his pen as human agility might be expected to do ; but to-night even he despaired of a task which anger and chagrin had made so

difficult. For Napoleon answered at this moment the critics of the boasted Constitution which Benjamin Constant had given to France; and he answered them with the fierce phrases and the petulant reproof of an autocrat whose hands have been caught by the democrats.

“All this,” he had said to Carnot, “will last a year or two”; but Carnot had replied, “It will last to all time, sire.” And in this belief the closest student of the Republican idea followed him. A sweeping victory over the Allies alone could restore the absolutism which the Emperor believed to be necessary to the very existence of France as a nation; it may be that he had become impatient of the issue, and that the shadow lay too heavily even upon him.

These swift days of his triumph, how short they were, how false in their glory and their promise! He had but to look across the frontiers to see the gathering hosts, to hear the bugles, and to harvest that bounty of hate grown a thousandfold more bitter since the King had fled. And in his heart he knew that the old overmastering energy had left him; that a phantom of inertness hovered about him and touched him with the hand of man’s common fate. Let the mind burn with the old flame of action, the body denied the impulse and refused to obey it. He was as a man swimming in the sunlight against a treacherous

tide which must carry him far from the shore to known seas of danger and death. And he grasped as he went at every straw upon the rolling waters about him ; touched any hand outstretched, and cried to those upon the shore that all was well with him and the haven sure.

Bernard read these passing emotions while he waited patiently for a hearing and watched the keen grey eyes which flashed upon him from time to time beneath their pursed and powerful lids. This was not the Napoleon of Jena and Austerlitz, he said, nor even the Napoleon of Leipsic. How stout he had grown ; how the fat wrinkled upon his flabby cheeks ; how leisurely were his gestures ; how thin the voice had become ! And yet it could not be denied that the perception was as keen as ever, and the ambition as unquenchable. The very desperation, the pathetic earnestness of the spoken words, denied a mental deterioration or any abatement of those gigantic powers of will and foresight by which he had come to immortality. Now, as ever, he appeared to be one who would accomplish his ends by the mere ardour of his desire that they should be accomplished. If he stooped before his enemies in Paris, it was that he might ensnare them more surely. If he delayed to march, it was that his wit might scatter dissension among the Allies, and add nations to his banner. This Bernard had perceived since

he first began his task at the Arsenal ; but it came to him very plainly to-night as he waited for the Emperor to speak. The master's failure must be his own ; he knew that defeat would send him back to the wilderness, never, it might be, to emerge thence again.

* * * * *

“ So you have been ill, Count ? ”

Napoleon spoke, standing before him and searching him with one of those keen glances which few could withstand. Bernard understood that he referred to his absence from the Arsenal, and he answered him honestly :

“ I have not been ill, sire.”

“ But you absent yourself from your post when you know how necessary it is for you to be there.”

“ The body is not always the servant of the will, and even the will is sometimes not at our command, sire.”

It was plain that he meant the reference to be as much to the Emperor as to himself ; and so Napoleon took it to be, though it pleased him but little that it should have been made.

“ The man who succeeds is the man who knows when to sleep,” he said a little bitterly. “ You keep the truth from me, Count. There is another story. I have sent for you that I may hear it.”

"Since your Majesty is so well able to read my thoughts, it would be waste of words to express them further."

He glanced at the patient secretary while he spoke, and intimated very plainly that his confidence was not for every ear. Shrugging his shoulders as though the prudence were ill-placed, the Emperor, nevertheless, dismissed the man with a quick gesture, and waited until they were alone before he spoke again.

"You should have been more frank with me, Count," he said at length. "There is no reward I would have denied to you. This little adventure is honest ; she has been of great service to me ; I would have made her your wife if you had spoken."

"Sire, a man does not speak in an affair of that kind unless a woman bids him."

"Do not say so ; it is the one affair in which silence is foolish. You should have told me, Count. I welcome the influence of her house, but I value the support less than the happiness of those who serve me with a gift of life and blood. Nothing would have been denied to you had you spoken ; but you leave your acts to speak, and they tell me of a service which depends upon a woman's humour. You did not go to the Arsenal yesterday or to-day because you heard that she is to marry Navarren. Admit that it was so, and

the rest will be plain. I cannot lose the cleverest engineer in Paris for open shutters in the Faubourg St. Germain. Be plain with me, and I shall know how to act."

"There is nothing to conceal from you, sire. I have loved Yvonne de Feyrolles since the day she first rode to my house at Grasse. If I have kept silent, it was because I believed that speech would not profit me. They told me from the first that she had many lovers. I believed that she would marry the Count of Foix—her own story said that she had come to Grasse to serve him, and I could not contradict it. Here in Paris I have asked her to be my wife. Her answer is that she will never marry. These are the reasons why I have absented myself from the Hôtel Feyrolles. A wise man does not visit a garden whose blooms are hidden from him, and yet he may carry the perfume of them in his memory, and grieve when the garden is no more. I confess, sire, that I heard with shame of her proposed marriage to the Marquis of Navarren—a man of whom she has often spoken to me with contempt. But I am powerless to prevent it, and I have learned submission as the chief lesson of my life."

"It is a poor lesson, Count. If you would succeed, do not submit even to what men call destiny. For myself, I do not believe in a destiny which is not a man's own handicraft, Had I

been of your school, the Bourbons would reign in this palace to-night. Submit to nothing, and be least submissive in the hour of your defeat. A stronger man, not in courage but in will, would have taken Feyrolles' daughter to his house and held her there against a regiment. Do you think that I would have interfered? This Navarren, what is he to me but a name to play with against the fools who love names? I care nothing if he come or go; no more than for a leaf blown from a tree. You say she will marry him to serve me. Why should she, since her wit has already done that which I desired her to do? Feyrolles is back in Paris; Navarren is to command a division against Wellington. This is her work. I shall know how to reward her when she answers my summons and comes to my palace. They say that she has not done so because she is ill. I doubt their story; that is why I sent for you to find out the truth. Go to the Faubourg St. Germain to-night, and carry to Mademoiselle de Feyrolles my commands that she shall take up her residence here as soon as it may be conveniently possible. Should you not find her there, I leave it to your diligence to deliver the message wherever she may be. There is a young man below, a Gascon, sometime in Mademoiselle's service, who may be useful to you in your quest. Take as many men as you please, in your own name, Count; and be

careful that the story remains a secret both for the lady's sake and your own."

He would offer no further explanation, but striking a gong to summon an equerry, he bade him conduct Monsieur St. Armand to the stables and instantly to find horses for him.

"You may need to ride, Count," he said significantly. "The Gascon will tell you. Trust to him, for he is a faithful servant. I am wanted by these noisy people here, and must go to them. Take with you my gratitude for that which you have done at Vincennes, and return to your work as soon as may be. I need all my friends—I have never needed them more sorely."

He held out his hand and gripped Bernard's with unwonted sincerity. From the Throne Room there came up to them a murmur of sensuous music and the perfume of many flowers already fading in the candle-light. And while the Emperor went down to receive the homage, true and false, of the heterogeneous company which lived so swiftly the brief days of its triumph, Bernard rode from the palace at a gallop to save the woman he had learned to love so ardently from the penalties of her devotion and her sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHÂTEAU OF SENLIS.

THE Gascon, Armador, was ever a man of few words, and he told his story in the briefest sentences, without anger or comment, as they rode from the palace toward the Porte St. Denis.

“Mademoiselle left her house to-night,” he said. “You would waste your time at the Hôtel Feyrolles, Count. I believe that she is now upon the road to Chantilly. The Marquis went that way at noon to-day, and the horses are ordered for a second stage. We shall find our own men at the gate; his Majesty sends half a squadron of lancers, and we have orders for the posts as we go. If no wrong is planned upon this side of the frontier, all will be well. But we are dealing with very dangerous men, excellency, and there is no time to be lost.”

“We will lose none,” said Bernard shortly, though he began to understand how serious that case was which induced the Emperor to furnish him with half a squadron of lancers. “Why did

you not come to me before, Armador? You must have known perfectly well that I am to be trusted. Why did you not send for me if Mademoiselle were in danger?"

"She forbade me to do so, Count. I must tell you that she has gone away to-night at her own wish. If I do not understand it, I am not alone in my difficulty. She has been playing with fire, and it will burn her if her friends are too late. We must ride hard, Count. The Emperor wishes it, though he will not do anything openly which will put the Duke in opposition again. We are to ride after Mademoiselle and bring her back to Paris. If the Marquis would buy her there, his Majesty will ask a big price. She will be held as a hostage for the good behaviour of the Feyrolles party, and, be sure, the Emperor will profit by our work. Navarren was aware of this, and he conspired to get her across the frontier. She is so clever that his success astonishes me. I am utterly at a loss to tell you what has happened, or how it came about."

"Your ignorance is natural. Remember, I know nothing of this. During the five weeks I have been at the Arsenal I have had but two brief notes from her; and neither expressed the desire to see me. Her friends told me that she was to marry Navarren, the man I had heard her mock upon the road to Lyons. I did not believe it;

impossible to do so. The story was no less a lie than that which would have named her Napoleon's mistress. I refused to hear it, and waited—for this. The rest can scarcely surprise me. I wonder that I am still interested; it is nothing to me whether she marry Navarren or another. I have no right to dictate to her."

The Gascon smiled as he bent over his horse and touched him lightly with his whip.

"You shall tell her so when we find her, Count. Pray God, we are not too late."

He smiled again when Bernard said, "Amen to that." And the words hampering him, he rode on in silence through the narrow tortuous streets by which they must reach the Porte St. Denis. Then, as now, this quarter of Paris was the nest of the night-bird who went out to seek prey while the city slept; and many were the scowling faces and the fierce oaths which followed the horsemen as they clattered over the ill-paved thoroughfares and scattered the loiterers from their dangerous path. None, however, dared to raise a hand against them; and at the gate they perceived the glittering lances and the bright shakos of the escort which the Emperor had commanded. Henceforth, it was a wild, stirring gallop, by wood and meadow, through town and village, onward as hunters who have struck a trail and will not draw rein until the death-cry is heard.

Bernard rode at the head of the troop with a merry young lieutenant upon his right hand and the Gascon upon his left. He had told Armador that the affair was none of his ; and yet, when the cool night air began to intoxicate him with its freshness, and the rolling heaven of stars opened a vista to his imagination, and the distant lights upon the horizon of Paris and her satellites were so many landmarks upon the high road of his passion, he began to realise how very much it was his business and how deep was the love he had conceived for this wayward mistress of so many hearts. Now, indeed, the possibility that she might lie in Navarren's arms this night, the victim whom cunning and falsehood had won, tortured him beyond words. For all that he had left in Paris—his new ambition to achieve success, his doubt of the Imperial destiny, his fear for the stability of the Folly which had momentarily succeeded—yes, for these things indeed he cared not a straw, now that a greater passion warred upon them. Pursuit fired his blood as a fever ; he rode as though a miracle would aid him, and his very desire would bring the woman he loved to his eager arms.

“ At what time did Mademoiselle leave her house, Armador ? ”

He asked the Gascon the question when the street of a village suddenly came to their view,

appearing as a black outline rising up with ghostly shape against a starlit sky. The youth bent low over his saddle, and answered him without drawing rein.

“At seven o’clock, Count.”

“Did she leave any message? Had she any escort?”

“Maurice, her servant, accompanied her, and Madame Fauvalet, who is known to you.”

“But no message, Armador——”

“None, save that she would not return until to-morrow, Count.”

“You yourself are unable to imagine any trick by which she might have been induced to leave her house?”

“The Emperor reviews Grouchy’s division at Senlis to-morrow, and rides on afterwards to Chantilly. Mademoiselle told me as much yesterday.”

“Good God, you do not mean——”

“I mean nothing, Count. Navarren has taken the same road—that is all. Here we are at the station. They will be able to tell us whether Mademoiselle has passed or no.”

He indicated a post-house at the far end of the village, where lights and voices spoke of waking stablemen and some activity at an unusual hour. When the troop halted at the door, they discovered a burly red-headed man waiting with a lantern in his hand. Evidently he had expected to

be asked for horses ; but when he perceived the lancers, the fount of his eloquence dried up suddenly, and he answered the questions put to him sullenly enough. No, he had seen no lady pass that way, but a coach had gone by an hour ago —“ and,” said he, “ do you ride like that, captain, you can give your horses a lift in it presently.” His parting shot expressed the hope that the plague might strike them before they caught the girl ; and with this, he went into his house and left them with their perplexities.

“ He said a coach,” exclaimed the Gascon, “ but Mademoiselle rode a good horse, Count.”

“ Then he is either lying or she has taken another road, Armador.”

“ Oh, name him for a liar,” interposed the young lieutenant, who had been all for burning the fellow’s house about his ears to teach him civility. “ I never yet knew truth and a horse go in double harness. Navarren has been colouring his hair for him. I’ll swear the napoleons were in his pocket while he talked to us. If you like, I’ll send a couple of troopers back and have him out, Count. We could do with a little light in the road.”

Bernard declined this pleasing offer with some haste, and they set off again upon the open high road, but at a more measured pace, toward Senlis and their named destination, the old town of

Chantilly. Armador, the Gascon, remained convinced of the truth of his story that Mademoiselle had been lured from Paris by a ruse, and that Navarren had abducted her ; but the empty winding highway, lying like a silver band across the hedgeless pasture-land ; this and the bright moon which showed them the mellow, desolate solitudes of the night, set a doubt in the minds of the others which curbed their ardour and was a godsend to the willing horses. Bernard, upon his part, was almost ready to doubt the wisdom of his quest, and to ask himself if he had any business there at all. If Yvonne had left Paris to meet the Emperor secretly, did she not deserve any fate that might befall her ? A false chivalry alone could send him as the ambassador of her honour and good name ; and his pride should have called upon him to return without delay. It may be that he would have done so, abandoned that pursuit, and remembered those ambitions he had left behind him in the city, but for an interposition of chance which instantly re-awakened a potent curiosity, and, speaking to himself of a young girl's peril, thrust from his reckoning every fact but that. It was nothing less than the figure of a man lying prone in the moonlight ; a figure at which the horses shied violently, and the more ignorant of the troopers crossed themselves as though it were not human.

The man's horse, whatever the story, grazed at the roadside, indifferent to all else but the sweet, dewy grass he found there. As the other horses approached the beast whinnied to them ; at which earthly sound some of the men took heart and did not hesitate to approach the figure. Armador, the Gascon, was the first to dismount, but Bernard quickly leaped down beside him, and standing together, they turned the body over, and instantly gave it identity.

"It is Maurice, Mademoiselle's servant, Count !"

"Does he breathe, Armador ? Good God, what a story ! Have they killed him, do you think ?"

The Gascon tore the shirt from the lad's breast, and revealed an ugly thrust which appeared to have escaped the heart by a miracle. Someone in the group about the body declared that there was still breath in it ; and at this a dozen willing hands were tearing bandages from their own linen and searching their haversacks for the flasks they carried.

"My poor Maurice ! It has certainly gone hard with you," said the Gascon, as he lifted the still breathing figure up to lay it upon a bed of grass at the roadside. Even his occupation, however, did not lead him to forget the greater need of the mistress he had come out to serve.

"Some of us must ride on, Count," he said earnestly. "Leave me two men, and I will carry

this poor lad to the next station. Mademoiselle is surely upon the road, and she has met Navarren. You will not spare the horses, Count——”

Bernard answered him by springing into the saddle and riding away without a single word to any one of them. All his pretty arguments concerning chivalry and the dues of self-respect were gone to the winds of heaven. He saw in his imagination but the girlish face and the bright eyes which had looked into his own at Grasse ; he heard but the gentle voice of one who had called him from the wilderness ; and believing that she had no true friend but him in all France that night, he cast every scruple behind him, and rode as if his own life were the promise of that wild, mad gallop.

Over the moonlit road, by woods and thickets, head bent, face hard-set, a man who had reaped nothing of fortune but the fruits of failure and shame, he rode for the honour and safety of a woman who loved another. Mad schemes came to him that he would compel her to quit Paris, to flee France, to find a new home and a new country ; he was possessed by a fierce desire never henceforth to leave her side or permit her the dangers of her liberty. Visions of his own happiness came and went ; in his uncontrollable passion of desire, he left the galloping lancers far behind him, and ventured alone and reckless of any consequence. At the last, the sound of a pistol-shot seemed to

awake him as though from some heavy but not unpleasant trance. He reined back his horse, and became aware that he was upon a high road, that the moon shone down upon him, and that a coach barred the way to him. Then he heard another voice cry out an alarm, and the flame of a second shot almost scorched his face.

There were five men about the coach, and two firing at them from within it. The horses lay dead in the roadway; and one of the postillions was stretched senseless between them, while a second sat dazed upon the grass as though fear had robbed him of his faculties. Of the attacking party, one was conspicuous above all the others—the boar-faced German, Odo von Ernenstein, who slashed at the door of the coach as though to hack it open by his sword alone. Bernard having no purpose in his mind, knowing nothing of this bloody affray, neither of the ownership of the coach nor of those who attacked it, rode straight at the German by some good instinct which said that he, at any rate, must answer for the trouble of that night, and pay here and now his heavy debt to Yvonne de Feyrolles. Taken upon his flank, utterly unprepared and intent upon his prey within the coach, the fellow went down with his horse as though a bolt from heaven had struck him. Not a cry escaped his lips when he fell; he uttered no sound as the horse appeared to roll upon him

and leave him for dead. And Bernard rode on, sure of his conviction that Navarren was there, and that the moonlight would betray him. For the second time his instinct served him well. A burly figure upon a good grey horse spurred at him from the darkness and discharged a pistol across the insensible postillion, sending the slugs rattling in the branches of the trees and lighting up the white face below as though by a flash from heaven. A second pistol snatched from his holster went flying from his fingers as his enemy cut at them—so good a blow that the leather of his saddle alone arrested it. Monsieur de Navarren had no further argument. Uttering a loud cry and calling upon the German to follow him, he rode headlong for Chantilly with Bernard at his heels.

From the clamour and heat of fray, the two passed swiftly to the silence of the white high road and the whisper of a breeze in the new-born leaves of the acacias. Bernard had ridden far, and his horse had the spirit but not the strength for this new demand upon his endurance; while Navarren, newly mounted at the station, drew away from him surely, and laughed defiance as he went. Whatever were his purpose, it appeared that he would now effect it; and it needed no second thought to tell Bernard that Yvonne de Feyrolles must be his goal, and that he rode toward her sanctuary, and would find her for all that could be done to

stay him. Had not the Gascon said that she quitted Paris upon her own horse? Certainly, then, she was not in the coach, and perchance had escaped in the *mêlée* and gone on to get what help she could, if any help were to be had. This was the supposition which facts justified so quickly when the Marquis turned his horse suddenly from the high road and galloped up a narrow carriage track, which appeared to lead to the very heart of the woods upon their right hand. He knew, then, where Yvonne would be found, and what house sheltered her. Bernard never hesitated an instant in following him. Though the way was intolerably dark, and prudence cried that it would be madness to go on, he pushed his tired horse over the heavy ground, entered the woods, fearing nothing, and emerged thence to find himself upon another high road with the Château of Senlis not a hundred paces away.

An old house, built in the days of Charles IX., with a moat about it and heavy battlements and narrow loopholed windows, the Château of Senlis seemed to speak of a mediæval age, recalled to-night by the torches upon its drawbridge, and the company of men which had gathered at its inner gate. These waited for Navarren to ride in; and seeing him emerge from the wood with a horseman at his heels, they shouted a warning all together; while some of them levelled their muskets and

sent a sharp volley back at the figure by the trees. Bernard knew not why it was that he went on headlong, but his very temerity did that which prudence would never have done. Those at the gate, believing that he had an escort with him, waited for its approach before risking their powder a second time, and being afraid of the unknown, they sacrificed opportunity to their fears. Thus it befell that, in the tense moment of the race, the pursued flogging his horse toward the bridge, the pursuer taking his pistols from their holsters and deliberately covering the fugitive, the wit and brains of the duel were found. And these spoils did not go to the Marquis.

Changing his purpose upon an impulse, and hesitating until Navarren had his horse almost upon the bridge, Bernard fired straight at his enemy's bridle-hand, and the ringing bullet, whistling under the very ears of the good grey horse, sent the beast swerving and stumbling headlong into the moat with a cry that drowned his master's voice, and was almost human in its pathetic terror. Nor had the echoes of this dread sound died away before the Gascon, with twenty lancers at his heels, rode out of the wood and commanded the men to open in the Emperor's name.

"Mademoiselle is here," he said to Bernard. "Go in to her, Count, and deliver your message."



"SENT THE BEAST SWERVING AND STUMBLING HEADLONG
INTO THE MOAT."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TRAGIC COMEDY.

THE terrified servants, believing their master to be dead, and caring little in consequence whether his château stood or fell, gave way at the summons, and permitted Bernard to pass. Down below by the moat the hilarious lancers were fishing Navarren from the mud, and crying to each other to bring water to wash him ; but within the house a strange silence reigned, and there were dim lights and swift moving figures, and many a witness to intrigue. Nevertheless, the quest was brief, for Mademoiselle herself paced the great hall, and Bernard met her almost face to face as he entered it.

He had wished and hoped for this interview often during the weeks of his ardent work for Napoleon ; but that he would find her again in the great hall of a mediæval château, with the light of torches glowing upon her childish face and armed men for her warders, and a terror written upon her eloquent eyes, he had not imagined.

“Where is my servant Maurice ? What have

you done with him ? ” she asked wildly, and this question was her only greeting to him.

He told her that Maurice was in good hands, and would be at the Hôtel Feyrolles before she returned there ; at which her expressive mouth curled in a manner which was not pretty, and she avoided the earnest glance he cast upon her.

“ I am not returning to Paris,” she said quickly ; “ since you are here you know that I go to Chantilly. Why do you speak of it ? I do not wish to be told what I am to do, Monsieur Bernard.”

He shrugged his shoulders. The pretence of it all was very womanly—he did not quarrel with it. Her excitement had robbed her even of excuse, and he confessed that she had never looked prettier than she did, standing there before him with tousled hair, and head thrown back, and defiance written on every line of her masterful little face.

“ As you please, Yvonne,” he said quietly ; “ but I bring you the Emperor’s commands. You are to return to the Tuileries—at once. I have ridden from Paris to tell you so, and ”—he added quietly—“ to save you from yourself.”

She turned upon him, white with anger, a hot retort upon her lips, and little fingers gripping her riding whip as though she would strike him. What right had he so to speak to her ? Did he know, then, that she rode to Chantilly that she might meet the Emperor secretly ? Had he read her



“ARE YOU, THEN, THE GUARDIAN OF MY LIBERTIES?”

heart and its hidden thoughts? She hated him because of the very self-control which could hide his own emotions so successfully and tell her nothing of the love which had sent him to her side.

“To save me from myself! Are you, then, the guardian of my liberties, Count St. Armand?”

“In no way, Yvonne. You are absolutely free to come or go to the palace where the Emperor is waiting for you, or to Chantilly, which circumstances now prevent him from visiting. Say that you prefer the shelter of this house, and I will take my leave at once and carry your message to his Majesty. You must make your choice—I am but the messenger.”

Her face blanched as she thought of the peril within the house from which devotion and courage had saved her at the ultimate moment.

“Where is Monsieur de Navarren?” she asked almost in a whisper.

“They are fishing him out of the moat. Shall I summon him to answer for himself? He, too, it appears, was on the road to Chantilly. Will you thank him—if he is able to hear you?”

“My God!” she exclaimed. “And but for you I should be a prisoner here to-night!”

“Say, but for the Emperor. I knew nothing of it, Yvonne, until he summoned me to the Tuileries. You did not keep me so well informed of your

movements that I could serve you of my own knowledge."

It was the reproach of her silence during the long weeks, and her eyes fell at his words.

"Why should I have sent for you," she protested, "since I could tell you nothing that you wished to hear? How would that have helped us? You are not a man who will consent to be a woman's friend and nothing more. I heard of your success, and was glad. Perhaps I did not wish you to know me as I am, Bernard. Say that it was so, and you will learn to understand."

"I have learned that lesson already, Yvonne. And yet I might have saved you something if you had been frank with me. When you return you will be wiser."

"When I return. I am to return, then?"

"As soon as we can find horses for the journey. Admit that there is some humiliation attached to our stay here."

"I admit it. While Monsieur de Navarren is in the moat, yes, the circumstances are embarrassing. What, then, Bernard?"

"The Emperor will tell you at the Tuileries, Yvonne."

"At the Tuileries? Where I am to be sold to the highest bidder! Oh, the shame of it, Bernard! —the shame of it——"

"I agree; the shame of it is to be remembered.

Reflection will tell you that nothing is to be won by impulse. The Emperor would not have lifted a hand to help you if his interests had not been concerned. You would have been Navarren's wife to-morrow had I gone to the Arsenal yesterday, Yvonne. Possibly the alternative is less pleasing to you, in which case, I imagine, you will be very welcome in this house."

He did not spare her, believing that he had some right to charge her with these things. If a word at hazard could recall her to the danger of the course she followed so blindly, then he cared nothing for the anger it might provoke. Her character revealed new phases to him—a desire for the contention of lovers, a determination to force herself upon the Emperor's notice by the very daring of her acts; and yet with this a devotion towards him which was not surpassed by the greatest fanatic in Paris. Bernard did not despair of her; he believed that the lesson of the night might influence her life as nothing which had yet befallen her. Upon her side lay the shame that her intentions should have been read so truly; and the determination that her pride should not bend before his accusations.

"Let Monsieur de Navarren speak for himself," she exclaimed hotly; "at least he will remember that I am a woman."

"If he had not remembered it, he would be

at the Tuileries to-night. Do you think that he would have stopped a coach and ridden into a moat if a man had been inside ? ”

She laughed outright.

“ My servant Raoul was inside,” she said. “ I knew that they would wait for me upon the road, and so I sent the coach ahead. But for Maurice and the accident they would never have taken me. Oh, do you think I could not outwit Jules de Navarren ? You should know me better than that, Monsieur Bernard. Did Grasse teach you nothing, then ? ”

“ Certainly, it taught me the wisdom of haste and a ready wit. I wish you to profit by that to-night.”

“ How to profit by it ? ”

“ To tell your story at the Tuileries before Navarren returns. Let us see what will happen if they dry him before you can speak. He returns to Paris and puts it abroad that he prevented your meeting the Emperor at Chantilly. Publicly said, that shuts the door of the Tuileries in your face. The Emperor will resent the story, and leave you to your fate. On the other hand, you ride away now while the grooms are cleaning this gentleman, and it is known that he tried to entice you across the frontier ; that you outwitted him by the trick of a coach, and put an end to his pretensions in the moat of his own house at Senlis.

The choice again is with you. But the time is short, and I, at least, am impatient."

She looked up, a shadow both of anxiety and fear upon her countenance.

"You would not leave me again, Bernard?"

"At the door of the Tuileries—yes."

"Do you think that we shall find horses?"

"The stables will not be empty."

"But your men? The Emperor sent the lancers, did he not?"

She was pleased that he should have sent them, and showed her pleasure openly. Bernard would not flatter her vanity.

"Yes, he sent the lancers to bring you back to reason, Yvonne."

"Impossible," she cried, and then wearily, "I am very tired, Bernard."

He laid a hand upon her arm sympathetically.

"There is the coach," he said; "that was an inspiration, Yvonne."

"Oh," she exclaimed; "what will Paris say of it—what will my friends say?"

"Let us go and find out——"

She did not resist him. There was still a cluster of men about the gates of the château, and the servants were ready enough with the tidings that Monsieur le Marquis was dangerously ill upstairs, and that surgeons and a priest were

with him. The intimation found Bernard entirely unsympathetic.

"It is a ruse to be before us into Paris," he said, and then calling the young lieutenant of lancers to him, he gave him his instructions.

"See that Monsieur le Marquis does not leave the château before to-morrow at sunset," he said.

The young lieutenant replied that the quarters suited him perfectly, and that he would cheerfully spend a week in them.

"Do you return to Paris immediately, Count?" he asked. "Then surely you will take an escort?"

"The footpads are caged," was Bernard's answer. "I look to you, my friend, to see that the door is kept shut."

And so he commanded them to get horses, and with a last word to the young man Armador to see that the servant, Maurice, was carried back to Paris as soon as might be, he escorted Mademoiselle to the coach which had served her so ill, and set off once more for the capital. No words were needed between them now. She slept upon his arm, and her silken hair touched his cheek as though to caress it. In his heart he found a great pity for her; and yet he knew that she was going back to Napoleon, to tell him of the shame which had carried her toward Chantilly, and of the tragic comedy which had defeated her purpose.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE REAPER.

PARIS liked the story of Yvonne's coach, and made of it a diversion from a serious hour. You had toy coaches with stout gentlemen disguised as ladies inside them, drawn upon the boards of the comic theatres, and modelled in metal by enterprising jewellers. The newspapers took the thing up, and the cartoonists delighted in it. Navarren they caught in all attitudes, on the box of the coach, on the top of it, and in the imperial behind. Had the man shown his face in the city, derision would swiftly have driven him thence. As a wag said, they waited to call a coach for him.

Yvonne was at the Tuileries by this time, installed there nominally as a lady of the bedchamber to Madame Mère. Bernard St. Armand had returned to his post at the Arsenal, where no smith worked harder for the Emperor and his cause. If he liked the stories well enough and rejoiced that they shut the gates of social Paris upon his enemy, none the less did he resent the circumstances of Yvonne's position, and find in them

the impregnable barrier to that concentration of effort and of purpose which his task demanded.

He believed that she loved the Emperor, and he had taken her to the Tuileries as the Emperor had commanded him to do. No other course had been open to him. To that crude suggestion made by Napoleon on the night of the interview, that he should marry her, he would not listen. If Yvonne loved him, let her come to him. The news which they brought to him added a buttress to his resolution. The young Count of Foix posed again as her lover, interceding daily with Madame Mère for her hand in marriage. She permitted the stories, and did not carry contradiction to Bernard's house; nor would he go to the palace to supplicate for it. What was it to him if these things were true? Truth, laughing ironically in his ear, said "It is all to you." So deaf are men when pride speaks.

He did not go to the palace, and yet he heard the news, chiefly by the amusing medium of pretty Madame Louise, who would come to his rooms when his day's work was done, and tell him precisely those things he had so little liking to hear. Yvonne, she said, had all the palace at her feet, "and they are very small feet, my friend; it is a great crush round about them." Of the Count of Foix she thought little. "He has a head like a paper box; it is not safe for a woman to hold

a match anywhere near it. Yvonne found him out long ago, when she trusted him with precious papers for Elba, and he sent them to his cousin at Antibes ; no, she will never marry Count Paul unless it be to save her from Navarren. I pity her from my heart. Marriage is the more comfortable state in Paris when your husband is too foolish to be of any account."

"If foolishness be the quality, she will find many suitable persons at the Tuileries," Bernard retorted, and then he said, "She did not tell me that they were the Emperor's papers which were taken from her. I might have guessed it if I had been at the pains to think. No other service would have asked so much from a woman——"

"Or found it, Monsieur le Comte. Men give their lives and women stake their honour for a throne which is already lost. That is our tribute to Corporal Violet."

"You are a pessimist to-night, Madame Louise."

"Impossible to be anything else since one has just left the Tuileries."

"Then there is news from London ?"

"The Duke of Wellington has returned to Brussels, and the English army is assembled. We have been expecting it for a month, and now it falls like a bombshell. All the nicest men are going away, of course. They have sent the best of them to Chalons as it is. What I have come

to speak to you about is Yvonne's going. I am sure they will not keep her in Paris—nothing would keep her. She fears that Madame Mère will not be able to protect her when the Emperor is away. It is madness, of course, but we are all mad in our own way, and we have no right to be censors. You must interfere, Monsieur Bernard; it is your business—no one else's."

She looked at him a little shyly, as though he might resent the suggestion, but the news of Wellington's sailing—this and all it must mean to the country which sheltered Bernard and to his own, put all other thoughts from his mind, and left him dumb before her. Wellington at Brussels! His brother officers already on the seas, animated by that splendid hope of a final victory over Bonaparte which had been his own hope when he served King George. He could depict the excitement in London, the hurried farewells, the marching battalions, the great doubt, the supreme resolution. And he—he who should have marched with these others—what of his own task? Had not his been the mind which directed the forging of the cannon about to thunder at English ranks and to number English dead? The reflection tortured him, and yet he knew that England had driven him out unjustly, and that treachery had been his portion. If he had become one of the servants of France, a woman had made him so. He did not in his

heart accuse Yvonne ; but his own past, with all its recklessness and monstrous indiscretions, rose up against him and said, "Here is harvest ; fate compels you to be a reaper."

Madame Louise had waited for him to speak, and perhaps she guessed some of the reasons for his silence. A shrewd woman of the world, she understood that this hour for him would be an hour of opportunities if he knew how to profit by it. Let him constitute himself Yvonne's protector during the Emperor's absence from Paris, and the best might follow.

"It is your business, Monsieur Bernard," she persisted. "You must forbid Yvonne to go."

He looked up and answered her abruptly :

"No ; it is the Emperor's business, Madame Louise. Let him forbid her."

"Has he nothing to do, then, but to attend to the affairs of the waiting women ? Believe me, he will have forgotten her very name to-morrow."

"And Madame Mère ? "

"Is there a woman in Paris who can cage Mademoiselle de Feyrolles when she has the mind to be free ? "

"Let us understand each other. You know perfectly well what this madness means. She is following the Emperor because she believes that she is in love with him."

"The very reason why her eyes should be

opened. Yvonne is a worshipper of enthusiasms. All this folly is not passion, but vanity. She has made a name for herself, and must live up to it. Besides, I really believe that Navarren is her bogey. He may return, Monsieur Bernard."

"You are contemplating the Emperor's defeat, Madame Louise."

"Then I am imitating you, Monsieur Bernard."

He did not deny it. Amid all his work during these busy weeks at the Arsensal, in his chambers, whether planning the reconstitution of batteries or directing the workmen in the forge's light, at the theatre, in his rooms, even in the Emperor's presence, this shadow of defeat lay heavy upon him. Not until this night, however, had it come home to him that the defeat would be at English hands. The allied armies of Europe meant nothing to him. He would have gloried in Napoleon's victory over them; but Wellington and the men who had been his comrades, English hearts and English voices, that victory he did not dare to contemplate.

This was early in the month of June, some fifteen days after Yvonne had been installed at the Tuileries, to which Bernard went rarely, and then with reluctance if it were not to speak to the Emperor and tell him of their progress. He had seen little of Yvonne at the palace; and it was ironical now to remember that Napoleon had promised her in marriage to him. Not once since

that memorable night had the subject of marriage been mentioned. The Emperor appeared to hold her as a hostage ; or, rather, as a prize which his newly-discovered master of artillery might win by diligence. The day of Imperial amours appeared to have gone by—or, at least, to be a rare day, and Bernard did not fear for Yvonne as once he did. His own interest in her had proved evanescent, though her seeming ingratitude stung him and reminded him that he should have expected nothing else from the character the world had given her. When Madame Louise left him, he had no sure purpose in his mind, either to accept or reject the mission which she would have imposed upon him. The news from England warred upon his rest ; and though the hour was late and all Paris began to think of dinner, he set off for the Arsenal, to hear what news they had there.

The night was bleak for a night of June, but there were many people abroad in the streets, to which some rumour of the momentous news had already come. As ever, during the Imperial *régime*, soldiers predominated, in the cabarets, at the doors of the theatres, marching with fine bravado, three abreast along the wide pavements—a very city of soldiers called from the death-fields of this metropolis of light and laughter and the glamour of war. Oh, yes, they were going to fight Wellington, and of those who footed it so briskly

this night, who dined and danced, and linked arms gaily with the merry cocottes, many must never return, and many find a grave by the Belgian frontier where the terrible English waited for them. But the shadow lay upon light hearts. They lifted the eagle to it, and said that the Man would save France. Their god was Napoleon ; their incense, death.

Bernard St. Armand passed swiftly down these busy streets, and ignoring all acquaintances, he made his way straight to the Arsenal, where the forges still roared and the giant arms swung the great hammers as though every hour were precious. Guns to kill the English—guns—guns ! Let the fellows at the barracks march and countermarch, dance to the bugle's note and lift their feet at a sergeant's nod. The guns would save France—these guns which now were but lumps of white-hot metal, flashing their crimson jets at the hammer's beat, deftly turned by hands of iron, caressed, beaten as children that are loved, but are destined for the grimmer battle of life to-morrow. How the men worked in the fierce red glow ! How the sweat fell from their faces ! It was a promise to the Emperor, they would have told you ; and this masterful Englishman, this silent, active man who passed among them as a shadow, was there to remind them of the promise, to solve all their difficulties, and to teach them the manhood of

their task—that his own countrymen might be shot down by the terrible guns they forged. Yes, verily, they acknowledged a Master in the Count of St. Armand, as Paris would call him—and their cause against the English must be just indeed, when he could direct their labours.

To-night, as ever, Bernard went among them swiftly and silently, speaking a kind word here, a sharp word there. His officers told him that a message had come from headquarters demanding ever greater urgency. He heard it without comment, and continued his inspection. When he had finished, and was standing apart for an instant in the dull glow of a monstrous furnace, he chanced to perceive a shadow creeping to his side, and turning quickly, he found himself face to face with the Emperor.

CHAPTER XXV.

RÉVEILLE.

So quietly had the figure passed them by that none of the workmen turned his head nor had there been a single cry of welcome. The shed wherein Bernard stood was deserted at that hour. From the distance there came the sound of hammers clanging and the song of merry smiths. A quivering beam of light, showing golden waves in its path, cut the darkness as with a flaming knife. In and out of this, often in the shadow, sometimes with a warm glow of the flame upon his face, Napoleon walked with deliberate step and knitted brow.

“I have brought you news, Count,” he said slowly. “I wished you to know it from me rather than another. Wellington has returned to Brussels, and your English friends are with him. The Imperial Guard will march at once. I shall follow them to Avesnes as soon as may be. Do not think that I am unaware of your difficulties. I have come to give you freedom, according to my promise. It was my hope that it would be the

Prussians first, and then your conscience would have been easy. You have done very well for me, Count. I have given instructions to-night which will tell you of my gratitude. When this is over, you will return to Paris and begin again. Yes, I know; we are not the agents of our country's misfortunes, however ill she may have treated us. And your work is finished—a work which France must not forget. Return to me, and be my friend when I return. I promise you a brief holiday. That much, at least, your honour does not forbid.”

He spoke with some earnestness, and yet the eyes betrayed him and called the voice to witness both cynicism and insincerity. That which the smiths could do for France had been for the time being done. Napoleon had no immediate need of Bernard St. Armand. If he gave him his liberty now, the man would return and bring his great talents with him. Not less quick-witted, Bernard understood him in this sense.

“I am grateful to your Majesty,” he said. “That which I have done here has not been against my own countrymen, but in your service. I accuse myself of nothing. As you have justly said, our day is done. The rest is with your soldiers. If it be to win victory over the Prussians, I wish you Godspeed with all my heart. If it be to meet my own countrymen, I am silent. Let me accept your command, and lay down my burden. It has

been a hard one sometimes, as your Majesty knows."

"I know it, Count. When I saw you at Grasse, I said, Here is a man who will carry to Paris that of which we have most need—tenacity and perseverance. I was not mistaken. The reports of your work are here. Let us go over them together."

He took a roll of papers from his pocket, and began as though to read from them in the dazzling light; but Bernard observed that he spoke from memory, and scarcely referred to the documents at all. Swiftly, and with a fine sense of order, he tabulated the results as they affected the armies he was about to command. So many guns had been forged this week, so many that. Of the new batteries, these were at Lille, those at Metz, others with the army of the Sambre. He did not fear for the strength of his artillery; and presently he continued, according to his habit, to restate his plan, but as one talking to himself and unaware of any audience.

"Blucher has Charleroi for his right, and they report his left at Liége; he holds an open country, and will be caught in his own trap. I shall make Avesnes my headquarters and strike at them in units; but it should be Blucher first. The Russians will withdraw if he is beaten, and I can deal with Austria. The English do not fear me, but they do not know me. There would have been no

Elba but for your English—yes, I respect a brave enemy, and I go to measure myself with Wellington.”

He repeated the words, “I go to measure myself with Wellington,” as though this fact must be graven upon his mind and remain the guiding impulse of his actions. Speaking of his troops, he regretted the veterans of Italy and Moscow; but admitted that the new levies did not lack enthusiasm. It would be a brief campaign and momentous, and its issue would depend upon the first blow and the dexterity of commanders—not a soldiers’ battle, but a general’s. This much and more he debated with animation as they paced the bare earth before the furnace doors; and then, no less abruptly, he arrested his step to speak of Yvonne de Feyrolles and his intention concerning her.

“What is your interest in this girl?” he asked. “How far has the matter gone since I sent you to Chantilly? If it be nothing to you, we will let the affair rest. You must speak, Count. I desire to serve you, and I have not forgotten my promise. She is a woman of a noble house, and will not go without fortune. If you have the mind to surrender your liberty, there is a pretty gaoler—and one who is much in love, if I am not greatly mistaken. Let me know what your wishes are. They shall not go ungratified.”

The strange candour of it found Bernard utterly at a loss ; and yet a certain pleasure accompanied his amazement. Never once since the day he had met Yvonne de Feyrolles had he imagined her to be in love with him. That others, especially the Emperor, differed from him, surprised him more than he would have admitted.

“ My interest in Yvonne is not changed, sire,” he rejoined with just a little warmth. “ If I can be of any service to her while the Court is at St. Cloud, command me now. But I doubt your Majesty’s view of it,” he added, with the air of a man who wished to be contradicted. Nor did the Emperor disappoint him.

“ Doubt nothing where my judgment of a woman is concerned,” he said smilingly. “ Mademoiselle de Feyrolles goes to Lille, to the house of a kinswoman there, in three days’ time. Follow her, and keep her out of mischief. You will be near the army, Count ; you will be near me. I could suggest no better way of passing the time. Go to Lille and wait my summons ; it is my wish.”

He would hear no refusal, and repeating the words, “ To Lille,” he led the way through the greater workshops to the outer gate, where his coach awaited him. But it was no longer possible that he should go undiscovered. Recognised by the furnace’s glare, and the light of monstrous lamps beneath which the smiths toiled, a great crowd

of begrimed and blackened men began to gape in astonishment, then to follow him, then to cry, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" Swarming about him as children who would touch his hand and hear a beloved voice once more, they lifted loud huzzas, heard afar and echoed by the gathering multitude in the streets without. Soon it became a very pandemonium of sounds and frenzy. Men snatched flambeaux from iron grids and ran before him to the gates; others raised bars of heated metal and waved them aloft; sheets of iron served them for drums; they opened the furnace doors that they might see him if it were but for an instant. And so he passed amid them, the grey eyes flashing, the cheeks flushed, the head thrown back as though to drink in this adulation. Never had a ruler a Godspeed more honest or one that rang so truly from the hearts of those who would win back his kingdom for him.

"I go to measure myself with Wellington," he had said. Bernard, perhaps, of all in that vast throng, did not believe that he would return a victor. "The end of the Folly is at hand," was his silent answer to the boast; and he remembered that it had not yet endured a hundred days. His own future could be the subject of no such facile prophecy. Should he go to Lille or await the end in Paris? A less shrewd mind would have understood why Napoleon wished him to go.

“He would have me near him,” he said. “I may be useful, when he has measured himself with Wellington.”

The tribute gratified his vanity. Undoubtedly he had succeeded in Paris, and if Wellington were vanquished, his fortunes could not fail to be established. A woman had called him from the wilderness to this *réveille* of battle and arms and its famous opportunities. And they declared that she loved him.

Bernard did not believe it. “I am sent to Lille that I may serve with the artillery,” he said.

And yet he knew that he would go because Yvonne went. Paris without her must be to him a city of the dead.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TO THE EMPEROR AND HIS ARMY.

BERNARD left Paris on the night of Sunday, June 11th, three days after the Imperial Guard had left; and, pushing on with all speed, he arrived at Lille on the second day after. There he found Yvonne in the house of a kinswoman, and with her the old blind Abbé whom he had last seen at Grenoble. It was an odd household, he thought, and yet one which reflected faithfully the remarkable domestic contrasts of that day. Scarcely was there a house in France which could not tell a similar story of hostile enthusiasms masked beneath a common roof. And of all divided families, that of the House of Feyrolles was surely the most notorious.

He went to Lille with the vaguest notion of the part he must play there, and he suffered without protest the kindly irony with which Yvonne received him. In the city about them the stir and the stress of a great armed camp were to be heard and witnessed upon every hand; and hardly

an hour of the day lacked some tidings of the other armies, which stirred the pulse and forbade the interest to wander. Now it would be news of Wellington and the troops he had massed upon the road to Brussels; now of Blucher and his movements across the Sambre. There were messengers going in or out, as many as the mills on the plain about the city. Bugles blared in the watches of the night; officers crowded the inns, the streets blazed with colour; here of scarlet lancers, there of green *chasseurs-à-cheval*, again of the blue-coated hussars and their high felt shakoes; or impressively of the bear-skinned horse grenadiers with white for their facings and tradition for their bluster. This whirling, teeming, chattering life followed Bernard to the gates of Yvonne's house; but beyond them he found the benevolent face of the priest; a white-haired old woman, and Yvonne herself with the story of the doubt in her pretty blue eyes and a manner which betrayed the magnitude of the interest as it must affect her in the years to come.

"I have been looking for you since yesterday at noon," she said, pleasure dictating a gesture of warm welcome. "Count d'Erlon heard that the Emperor was sending you, and he rode over to tell us. Yes, Monsieur Bernard, I am very glad to see even my gaoler now. No one here understands, no one thinks what this must mean to

those who love. And the hours will decide it—it may even be to-morrow.”

Bernard smiled when she called him her gaoler ; but his satisfaction that he must be her guardian during the terrible days to come forbade him to protest ; and he told her very candidly that which the Emperor desired him to do.

“Paris is no fit place for you until this affair is over, Yvonne,” he said. “You know the dangers, and we will not speak of them. I am to wait the Emperor’s commands here. He is at Avesnes, but he may move upon Brussels any day, and then my guns will speak. If destiny is kind to France, you will be back in Paris in a fortnight. I cannot from my heart wish that it may be kind, because my countrymen are your enemies ; but my own feelings are not concerned. It is your happiness I desire ; you have known it ever since we left Grasse. Let me be your servant while we are exiles, and I will be what you wish afterwards——”

“Not my servant, Monsieur Bernard—my friend,” she protested. “We will keep the keys together. My prison shall be your prison, until the Emperor opens its gates. You have been in the English army yourself, and you know. What hope is there for him ? Will he come back to us ? I count the minutes sometimes, and pray for the news. Will they send him to Elba again ? God, it is awful to think how many must die before

that question is answered ! And the homes of France must be made desolate, and the children must suffer because of it. I cannot sleep while I dream of these things ; and yet I believe that France will be greater because of them. If it were not so, the eternal destiny would not permit it. Do you not believe that, Monsieur Bernard ? We learn by sorrow, and are greater because of it. I am sure that it is so. My own life tells me that it is true.”

She was pretty enough in the philosophical mood, though it rarely endured ; and when the thought had passed, she went on to speak vivaciously of her friends in Paris and of that which was happening there. What scandals the sudden order to march had caused ! How some of the husbands blessed the war ! And the deputies, the parliamentary gentlemen whose tongues had just been oiled, and who were prepared to talk the new Constitution out, how they gnashed their teeth to-day ! If the Emperor defeated Wellington, these men would be stricken dumb, she said, and as for the brooms which were sweeping out the great houses in the Boulevard St. Germain against the Royalists’ return, no bonfire would be large enough to burn them. Yvonne believed that the Emperor marched upon Brussels to kindle that fire, nor would Bernard contradict her. Whatever thoughts lay locked up in his own heart, he had

not come down there to share them with the girl Napoleon had asked him to protect. She needed all the consolation he could afford her; and in her capricious movements, her tireless energy, and the unnatural note of much of her conversation, he read and understood the grave situation she faced so boldly. Let the eagles be defeated at Waterloo, and Yvonne de Feyrolles became homeless in that hour. Bernard would not ask himself if he might profit by that opportunity.

It was in an old house of Flemish fashion, upon the brink of one of the many canals which cut the town of Lille into ill-defined islands, that these things were spoken of. Bernard was not a little surprised to discover that the old Abbé had lost some of his prejudices in the face of a common enemy, and that he desired news both of Wellington and the Emperor as ardently as anyone. Almost from hour to hour, the servant Maurice—happily recovered from the affair at Senlis—and Armador, the Gascon, went over to the citadel to catch the gossip; while the younger officers came readily enough to see Mademoiselle Yvonne and to bring her a gracious offering of news. From one of these, upon the evening of the Wednesday after his arrival at Lille, Bernard heard that the Emperor had just issued a proclamation to his troops, and that the army would be concentrated upon the following morning in the vicinity of Charleroi and

the direct approach to Brussels. This news he told over the dinner-table, and although Yvonne made no remark in the Abbé's presence, it was plain that her interest could not content itself in silence, and that she had already resolved upon some change of plan. As for the old Abbé, waiting patiently in that lonely house for the return of a king who would deal more gently with Holy Church, to him the intelligence brought both hope and the honest fruit of a courtly patriotism.

"I pray God grant that which is best for France and happiness for her children," he said reverently; "we have had too much glory these later years. Our need is peace; but we do not cry 'peace' when the enemy is within the gate. My old ears tingle when I hear those sounds, Count. I remember the day when I myself would have drawn a sword for the honour of my country. Ah, yes! I could see the sun then, and the Eternal had not called the night upon me."

He spoke with resignation, and Yvonne responded with a true woman's sympathy. The dinner being done, she seated herself by the open window, whence she could look out upon the esplanade; and there she told him all that a man would wish to know of the streets and those who moved therein. Some of the regiments were marching out already with banners flying and drums rolling. The officers of these were known

to Yvonne, and named by her to the Abbé, who listened with sightless eyes and ear bent, and the mind groping in the darkness to recall some scene of his past which should recreate this scene for him. When night came down and the old oil-lamps gave golden aureoles to the dull waters, and Lille should have been thinking of bed and sleep, the stirring *réveille* still echoed through her darkened streets, and great fires burned in the barrack squares where the waggons made ready for the march. It was then that Yvonne, alone with Bernard by the open window, spoke to him of the Emperor, and of the new impulse which bade her follow him.

“I am a child of the Army,” she said. “How can I stay here? The doubt would drive me mad. It is true that the Emperor forbade it, but he did not know. What will the days mean to me, Bernard? How can I live through them? Look into my eyes, and tell me that I am wrong! No, you cannot say it; you know what I am thinking and suffering to-night.”

It did not surprise him. He had been expecting it since he quitted Paris. This child of adventure, with her babyish face and her mischievous curls and her intangible personality, he knew that she would lead him whithersoever she would. Deep down among his own desires lay the wish to draw nearer to the scene—to know, and not to guess,

events. Birth had made of him a soldier ; the sword was his heritage. How should he refuse her, even though a harder voice whispered, "She goes because she loves the Emperor" ? The voice he would not hear, but with the bugle's note still ringing in his ears, and the glare of the watchfires guiding him, and the ring of hoofs for his clarion call, he stooped and touched her forehead with his lips.

"At dawn," he said, "to the Emperor and his Army !"

CHAPTER XXVII.

A VAST HORDE MARCHING.

THERE was no need to ask the road of any man as they turned southward across the marsh, and left the town of Lille behind them in their pursuit of Napoleon. Through the watches of that tempestuous night countless feet had trodden the path and numbered the leagues upon the great highway ; and now at dawn, when heavy clouds rolled eastwards across the sky and the gloom was that of mid-winter, the cavalcade remained unbroken. Spread abroad over vast distances in one unbroken chain, the mighty host pressed on to join the Emperor ; so that, had it been possible to view the scene from a height, one would have beheld a boundless plain, watered abundantly, and everywhere uplifting the sails of mills, and over this plain a great horde marching resolutely. Of plan or scheme there seemed to be none. Regiments of cavalry pressed upon infantry ; the infantry jostled the gunners and would ride upon their carriages ; there were lancers with hussars for their companions, heavy cavalrymen cheek by jowl with light chasseurs, Poles chatting to Gascons,

ammunition waggons at the heart of infantry regiments—a very glitter of colour beneath the dull, grey sky; a seething multitude setting out as hunters to the prey. For this was war, and the bugle had become the music of the march, and the drums rolled no longer, for the drummers covered them when the great drops began to fall from the threatening heavens; and now men marched to the lilt of their own courage, and those who asked themselves, “What of the morrow?” feared the question, and were afraid of their own voices.

Was not this angry sky an omen? Did not the rolling black cloud spread a pall already over the living who marched to death? It might have been so. For the day broke shudderingly, and the wind in the trees spake with a voice of woe. These men, who would have lifted their eyes to the light, marched on in darkness, to Quatre Bras, to Waterloo, to the mad flight in which all should be lost. And with them, animated in some measure by their hopes and fears, went Bernard with little Yvonne.

She had begged him to take her to Napoleon’s camp, and he, being sure that dissent would go unheeded, consented to be her guide. In her old habit, just as she had come to him in the woods at Grasse, so she rode here toward the Belgian frontier—a picturesque figure in a green coat, a

seeming youth serving a baptism of fire ; but not the merry, laughing Yvonne of Grenoble, for the strenuous days had changed her greatly, and the shadow of the doubt lay heavily upon her.

What purpose she might serve if it were not the gratification of her curiosity, Bernard could not so much as hazard ; but he, too, shared her unrest, and the desire to know was not less strong upon him. Allied as he was during these fateful hours to the French army, he did not accuse himself because his English sympathies had become latent and a spirit of *camaraderie* with the brave men about him would not be denied. A victory for Napoleon would establish his fortune. He had already been richly rewarded for his labour at the Arsenal, and greater honours awaited him if the eagles returned victorious to Paris. But let Wellington drive these hosts back, and his own ambition would be nipped in the bud and the bitterness of defeat known to him also. The hostile interests could not but agitate him greatly. He knew that he loved Yvonne ; but how could his love befriend her if the gates of Paris were shut upon him and the Châlet of the Broken Rock became his only refuge ? These thoughts were ever with him upon the way. The bleak day attuned itself to his mood. It almost seemed to him that the sun would never shine upon France again.

Their route lay through Mons to Charleroi,

whither the Count d'Erlon marched at the Emperor's order. They rode fast, mounted upon good horses which had carried them from Paris; and while they were often abreast of the army, there were hours when they found themselves farther afield among pretty woods and winding streams and labourers busy amid the hay. Here no tongue of war had spoken. Men worked and ate and slept as they had worked and ate and slept any day these twenty years past; but go a league farther, and you would espy lances shining amid the trees and guns labouring upon the slopes, and infantrymen plodding their weary way, and all the picture and the pageant of strife in aspect most alluring. For these are the contrasts of war, and no orator's tongue may paint them as eloquently as the smiling fields it devastates and the home its hand makes desolate.

Through such changing scenes as these, in a very deluge of rain, sometimes amid storm and raging tempest, the travellers reached the old town of Mons toward nightfall; and there, by the kindness of Count d'Erlon, they obtained shelter in one of the inns which the staff had seized. As they approached the scene of conflict, the excitement became more vivid, the doubt of the issue more terrible. Aides-de-camp rode in almost every hour with news either of Ney or the Emperor. Officers, who had not tasted food since dawn, left the tables

to hear of old Blucher's formation at Ligny, and of the part the left wing must play in holding Wellington back. Some said that the English were as good as defeated already, and that the Belgians would not stand. All agreed that there would be battle to-morrow, and some decisive gain; and yet it was possible to catch a note of doubt and to perceive the depression for which the dismal march was responsible. As for Bernard, he had ears for every story, eyes for every face, and he would run to Yvonne with his tidings, glad to bear even a scrap of intelligence that could give her comfort. At a later hour, when many of the regiments had marched on toward Charleroi, and the rain ceased and a glimmer of starlight shone in the breaking sky, these two walked together beneath the eaves of the old houses; and as they walked a memory of Grasse came back to them, and they spoke of it frankly.

"I was thinking of the night I rode to your house, Bernard," she exclaimed, without preface. "How long ago it seems! What years of thought have passed since then!"

"It is a little more than a hundred days," he said reflectively. "I should know, for I have counted them, Yvonne."

"Counted them? You counted them?"

"Every one of them, Yvonne. When something happens to a man which he must never forget, he

takes refuge in figures. Oh, yes ; it was very foolish of me, but then I have been much alone since that day."

She looked up a little startled, and instinctively drew closer to him.

"I am cold, Bernard," she said. "Cover me with your cloak as you covered me at the Châlet."

He obeyed, and she crept beneath the shelter of his arm and clung to him almost as a child might have done, while they walked on down the broad street ; and from every open window there came the talk and laughter of troopers and the bright lights of the fires they had kindled.

"I am glad that it is to be the Prussians first, Bernard," she said as they went. "The Emperor has nothing to fear from Marshal Blucher. If he follows him into Prussia, there may be no meeting with the English after all. That would be the best news they could bring me. I spoke to General Cambronne before we left Paris, and he believed it would be the Marshal first. Austria will make peace with us if the Prussians are defeated ; and if Austria does not join, England will not. We shall hear everything to-morrow if we find the Emperor at Charleroi. Even you would wish him victory then."

He admitted candidly that it would be so, though he did not tell her that the issue must be between the Emperor and Wellington. Her desire not to



"SHE CREPT BENEATH THE SHELTER OF HIS ARM."

offend him by partisanship was as pretty as her unabated faith in the Imperial destiny.

“The generals are afraid of your countrymen, but the Emperor is not,” she said; “they have always been his enemies, but if they would come over, he would be Master of the World. I have often heard him speak of it. At Grasse he told me that he would sooner have your help than that of twenty of his own officers. He knew your name, and he never forgets.”

The compliment pleased him, and in turn he asked her a question he had long desired to ask :

“You rode to Antibes upon the Emperor’s business. Was not that so, Yvonne ? ”

She admitted it with a nod.

“And you told me that your interest in Count Paul carried you there.”

She laughed a little shyly, but not as one who repented.

“I have twice been to Vienna in the Emperor’s service, and may go a third time. He chose me, of all in Paris, to carry letters to her Majesty ; he knows that I would never break faith. When my brothers discovered that I visited Elba they persuaded the King to have me watched. Count Paul stood sponsor to dupe them ; but he was foolish, and his kinsman at Antibes obtained letters which would have betrayed us both. I won those

letters back, as you know ; but the greater secret they never robbed me of."

"And you delivered the Emperor's letters at Vienna ? "

"I have never failed to do so. When he returns I am to be his messenger again."

"Does he not owe you a little more gratitude than he has yet shown, Yvonne ? "

She thought upon it, looking a little wistfully at him.

"The Emperor is grateful to me, but to show me gratitude would be to betray himself. I believe that he meant to protect me against Navarren, but my brother's interest had to be set upon the other side. He has always desired the support of the old nobles of France, and if he could have bought the House of Feyrolles, he would not have bargained about the price. That is what I told you at Grasse, when it was nothing to you, Bernard—nothing at all, since it fell from a stranger's lips."

"It was a very great deal to me, Yvonne ; it always has been. When we return to Paris it will be much more."

"When we return to Paris—when—when ! Do you never wish that a thought might bridge the hours, Bernard—that you might live in one instant the events of a day or a year until the worst or the best were known ? To-morrow, yes ; but how can one wait for that ? "

“I shall help you to wait, Yvonne. Have you asked yourself what you will do if the Emperor is defeated?”

“If the Emperor is defeated? He will never be defeated! It would be the end of France and our people.”

“Remember, I am an Englishman. I am putting an Englishman’s idea to you. If by some unforeseen accident this great army were driven back, do you wish me to go with you to your own house?”

“God knows what I wish,” she said. “That is something I dare not think of, Bernard. Listen to those men over there. They must fight to-morrow, but they do not ask themselves if they will be alive when the sun sets. I will tell you what I will do when the worst comes. To-night I feel and believe that it is impossible.”

He would say no more, to be the enemy of her just faith, and he turned the subject with a jest, reminding her how many of his old friends must be in camp before Brussels, and telling her a great deal of his own life’s story. He admitted many vices: he was an incurable gambler, and he had been a man of hot blood and temper. But his conscience acquitted him of any grave wrong against his fellow-men, and he had always held women in honour. An habitual philosophy led him to accept banishment with little regret.

“If my friends remember me, they will come to me,” he said. “A man who suffers a social injustice must find other advocates than his own tongue. I will return to England when they admit my right to go there. You have made it easy for me, Yvonne. Let the worst come, I have the memory of your friendship.”

She protested that it was so, and pity for him and something greater than pity unloosing her heart-strings, she pressed his hand in both of hers and answered him passionately :

“Your friend always—let it be sorrow or joy. Your friend, Bernard, while I live.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FARMHOUSE APART.

THEY slept a little while at the zenith of the night ; but the day had scarcely broken—a day of weird cloud and fitful tempest, and pitiless rain—when they were upon the road again, pressing forward to an unknown goal. Uncertain of their purpose, perhaps doubtful of its wisdom, they knew that it could not fail to lead them to bloody scenes and sounds of woe. “The Emperor meets the Prussians to-day,” the soldiers said, and they shouldered their muskets more willingly and their step rang lighter because of the word. The night would give them victory—they never doubted it.

It has been said that Bernard rode without a defined purpose when he quitted Mons and determined to follow the army toward Charleroi and the great high road to Brussels. Had he been pressed to declare himself, he would have said that it was in his mind to press on to headquarters, and when he had ascertained Napoleon’s plan, then to watch the battle from some distant place, where he would compromise neither his own honour nor

Yvonne's safety. That such a course must be attended by many risks was not to be doubted ; but he believed it to be less hazardous than a return to Lille, where the Royalists would hasten to congregate if the Emperor were beaten. His nationality, he thought, would protect him in Belgium if the worst came to the worst ; and in any case the claims of a soldier's curiosity forbade retreat. Argue as he might, the child of adventure at his side held resolutely to her determination to find Napoleon ; and her very dependence upon his friendship, her loneliness and her faith, appealed to a man's imagination. Together to the end let them go on, as she had said, in joy or sorrow, to the downfall of her Emperor, or to his final triumph.

The day dawned in gloom and wet. As the hours rolled on there came no abatement of the violence of storm or of the drenching downpour. The road carried them henceforth into wooded, undulating country, a land of generous crops and verdant forest and kindly waters ; at other times a land of smiling plenty and prosperous homesteads ; but to-day a country upon which the rain beat furiously, and a spirit of the uttermost desolation breathed a ghostly breath of death. Let the eye turn where it would, across those rolling pastures or afar to the black horizon of forest, it encountered crouching troops shielding their faces

from the stinging drops ; guns rolling in a sea of mud ; horsemen with ruffled plumes and sodden cloaks, and an air of dejection beyond all expression pitiful. Doggedly, as though endurance were the price of life, these men spurred on toward the battle which the day must witness. No words passed their lips ; they hailed none as they went. Let a trooper fall of very weariness, no comrade dismounted to give him a hand. If a house opened its shuttered windows to deliver wine and bread, they gathered like ravening wolves to fight for the spoil, and thanked the givers with blows and curses. Nor were the officers in better plight. They, too, must bend the head before that pitiless torrent ; their horses must tread the seas of mud and shiver at the terrible blasts, because the Master of France had need of them. Little wonder that the hearts of all were cold and heavy, and that men began to cry already for the night which would give them shelter or death.

Bernard had carried food from the inn at Mons, and he had found a soldier's cloak for little Yvonne. Her bravery did not astonish him, for he had already witnessed it at Grasse and Paris. Here upon the road to Charleroi she went with a determination and a courage which few even of the men displayed. Once or twice, it is true, she asked wistfully if it were far yet, and he gave her the vague answer of a man who fights with brute despair.

"The clouds are lifting, Yvonne," he would say. "Look, it is lighter in the west already. We are sure to find someone who knows us at Charleroi, and then we will make a great fire and forget all this. Would not the country be splendid if the sun shone? I was always fond of forest scenery; the distances lend themselves to the individual imagination so easily. When I see a glade of oaks, I always put Robin Hood at the far end of it. We could have camped over yonder if it had been fine, but we must get on now. Are you very wet, Yvonne? Do you really feel able to go?"

She answered him with a brave word.

"I would go on if the fields were a sea of fire. How could I turn back now, Bernard?"

"I do not ask it, Yvonne. We are of one mind. Forward, by all means, to dinner and bed at Charleroi."

"It must be Charleroi, I suppose?" she rejoined, as one thinking upon another course. "Have you heard nothing, Bernard—nothing but the sound of the rain? My ears have burned ever since we left the village. Listen now. I am sure I heard it again then."

She reined back her horse, her face flushing, and a new light of interest in her eyes. When Bernard imitated her and could accustom himself to other sounds than the moaning of the wind in the trees, he knew that she had heard aright.

Muffled, low, a terrible voice coming to them from the black horizon spake of battle already raging. Again and again they heard it, that thunder of a message rolling across the soddened earth ; and it seemed to them almost as though a spirit had spoken from the black heavens to lead them to that mighty theatre in which the drama of nations must to-day be played.

Other ears heard the sounds, and many a good horse answered to the spur when the message came. Almost impassable as the high road had been, while the belated regiments went at their ease upon it, the press became indescribable when the word passed that the battle had begun. What mattered the blinding rain or the raging wind, or all the fury of the elements, menacing but harmless, while this human storm scattered the leaves of life and beat them sodden to the steaming earth ? Instantly, as in a vivid picture, Bernard imagined that distant scene and all that happened upon it—the English infantry solid in their squares, the mad charge of heavy cavalry, fire vomited from the angry guns, cries of triumph and cries of death, a blaze of crimson and of gold ; prone figures writhing in agony, stark eyes unflinching before the rain drops—a scene of passion unloosed and all that is best and all that is most terrible in the nature of man. Such a vista the booming of a gun upon the horizon created for him, and

he sat as in a wonderland, silent before its fascinations.

"It is Ney and the left wing," he exclaimed at last, rousing himself with an effort and conscious that she waited for him to speak. "The Count said that Wellington would engage him between Quatre Bras and Brussels. We have travelled many miles from Mons, Yvonne. The road divides here, you see, and the right branch goes to Charleroi. If we could follow it, we might find your friends, but we should not find the Emperor."

"We cannot follow it," she exclaimed; "no one could pass that multitude. And we should not find the Emperor; he will have left before that began. Why do you hesitate, Bernard? Are you afraid for me? Is there no place for a woman when men suffer and die?"

"If you wish it, we will ride toward Quatre Bras," he said quietly. "Remember that I cannot protect you if the news be ill."

"It is nothing to me," she answered a little stubbornly. "Let the finger of God direct us."

He assented without answer and turned his horse across the heavy fields toward the northeast and the high road to Nivelles. There were few soldiers here, and the peasants worked about their barns with scarce a remark upon the dread tidings of the guns. An hour's steady riding carried them to a belt of woods which they entered fearlessly,

so muffling the voice of battle and shutting the terrible sounds from their ears. When they emerged upon the farther side, they came upon a considerable homestead, about whose doors a little group of officers had gathered. Foremost amongst them, Bernard recognised the Count of Foix, and he never met a man with more pleasure in all his life.

“What is the news?” he cried. “Tell us, for God’s sake! We have been imagining it for an hour or more.”

The Count, too well aware of Yvonne’s character and her adyenturous habits to make any remark upon her presence, lent a hand to help her from her horse, and gave them all the tidings he had.

“Blucher is done for,” he said. “We are riding back to the frontier with the news. Ney holds the English at Quatre Bras, and has the best of it. We win all along the line; there has been nothing like it since Jena. You will find a fire inside and decent wine. Make yourselves at home before any of our fellows come up.”

Bernard asked him one question more.

“How far are we from Quatre Bras?”

“You are about eight miles as the crow flies.”

He did not wait for any further parley, but calling his men together, he set off at a gallop upon the high road to Paris, and was instantly lost to their view. His splendid words, still lingering in Yvonne’s ears, left her as in some trance of

joy from which the present scene could not awake her. It may be that English pessimism had opposed itself successfully to her own enthusiasm since she quitted Lille; but here, upon the very threshold of battle, she heard the tidings which her faith demanded and all her womanly hope had dwelt upon. Another, perhaps, would have, by word or gesture, expressed the conflicting emotions of which she was now the victim; but such was not her habit; and although her hand trembled and her lip quivered when Bernard led her into the house, she did not immediately refer to the Count's intelligence nor appear to remember it.

"Cannot we go on a little way, Bernard? Must one stay here?" she asked him, while they went in.

He told her that the horses were exhausted, and that rest had become imperative.

"The engagement must be over," he said. "I no longer hear the guns. We should go upon a purposeless errand. It would be madness to think of helping those poor fellows in our condition. Let us get dry first, and then learn what has happened. I am sodden to the very skin, and you can be little better off. These good people will take pity upon us, I am sure."

He appealed to a thin, shrivelled old woman who must have been eighty years of age at least—a timid old lady with a dark-eyed daughter at

her side and two pretty grandchildren clinging to her spotless apron. The poor creature had been woefully frightened by the sounds of battle; but her house lay remote from the direct line of march, and had escaped the general pillage in which the French troops excelled. When she discovered that a soldier could speak with gentle voice and courtly deference, and that he brought, as she believed, a mere lad with him, she began to bustle about with agile step and to bid the others help her in her work of charity. As for the horses, the farm hands would care for them, she said, and it was lucky that she had sons of divers height and build whose clothes would serve the strangers—at which Yvonne laughed, and frankly declared her sex, to the dame's speechless astonishment and wonder at the habits of the distant city of Paris.

“They tell me such things, but I do not believe them,” she exclaimed. “The good God help me to hear aright. You shall go to my daughter's room, monsieur—that is, mademoiselle—and heaven forgive me for what I am saying.”

Her distress amused them as much as her motherly solicitude won upon their gratitude. Some kindly hand of fortune, surely, had directed them to that farm, with all its warmth and light and friendship offered so willingly. There they ate and slept, and when night fell and the torrential down-pour still continued, they gathered about a vast

fire in the common sitting-room, and met the old dame's sons. These had been abroad toward Quatre Bras, and they had their stories of that wondrous day, never to be forgotten in Belgium while these people lived.

Ay, what a tale it was ! How little it comprehended the issues of the mighty duel or their meaning in the story of the nations ! In garbled words the lads indicated that there had been soldiers everywhere—in the woods, in the meadows, over the river ; horsemen and foot-soldiers, generals upon proud chargers, kings and princes, as they believed, riding out to that affray. Ay, there were rare goings-on. The smoke lay so thick over the land that you wondered that they could see each other. And then the dead and dying. What cries of agony ! What pain and suffering !

The English, they said, undoubtedly were defeated ; they had left many dead upon the field, but they had retreated in good order upon Brussels, and would fight again. It was equally true that the Emperor had settled old Marshal Blucher this time, the Prussian pig ! He had been taught a lesson he would not soon forget. Everyone believed that the Emperor would come up with Wellington to-morrow and bring this awful business to an end. Then men could go to work in the fields again without fearing for their ears or their horses. Such was the tale about the roaring fire

during the night of rain and tempest. None thought of sleep, none left the hospitable hearth. What tidings came from without were those of scattered and belated regiments moving in the distance toward the scene of conflict. From time to time stragglers from the army knocked at the outer gate and implored a drink of wine or a meal of bread. A few riderless horses, called by their more fortunate fellows in the stables of the farm, came galloping across the meadows and stood whinnying in the lane; some of them pitifully wounded, many with almost human eyes, which begged shelter from the elements. When the intolerable darkness at length passed and a gloom of grey light succeeded to it, Bernard went out with the lads to the high road, as gleaners in a sodden field, and almost the first object he encountered was the dead body of a grenadier, lying huddled across the slippery path. The man had been thrust through by a bayonet, and surpassing courage alone had carried him to their door.

Elsewhere no living thing appeared to move either upon the road or across the desolate pasture lands. Count d'Erlon's division had joined the Emperor by this time, and the highway from Mons was not the way the greater army travelled. Such of the peasants as appeared when the day had broken, went to their work with the air of men knowing nothing of yesterday. A little church in

the hollow opened its doors for the morning Mass, and two or three good women trudged down toward it. Melancholy, however, was the note of the scene, and when Bernard had shivered a little while in the cold and wreathing mists, he returned to Yvonne's side and insisted that she should sleep.

"It will be to-day," he said. "You are not well enough to go farther. Let the horses rest a few hours, and then we will think of it. If there is any news, we shall have it soon enough. You heard those fellows say that Blucher is defeated. Sleep upon that, and let the day bring its own message."

She did not protest; the long ride had exhausted her, and now, when the terrors of the night were past, she had not the will to insist.

"We can go on when the rain ceases," she said a little wearily; "someone is sure to come if all is well. Perhaps we could be in Brussels to-night if the Emperor is there. Let us both rest, Bernard. I feel that I have lived a hundred years since I left Paris."

"The sun will be our friend," he said. "We shall find it shining when we awake, Yvonne."

"The sun will never shine on France again," she said. And he knew then that, in spite of the tidings, the great hope had deserted her, and that for the first time since he had met her in the South she had ceased, at the voice of premonition, to believe in Napoleon's destiny.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GUNS OF WATERLOO.

No news came to the lonely farmhouse during the long morning, though many stragglers from the battlefield of the previous days passed it by and told their story. All agreed that the good news was correct, that the Emperor had beaten the Prussians over by Ligny, and that Ney had driven the English back at Quatre Bras. To-day, they said, the forces were united and the battle would be at the village of Planchenoit, on the high road to Brussels. Good ears could distinguish the cannon already, just like a rumble of distant thunder upon a grey horizon, and all agreed that, Blucher being done for, the issue would not be long in doubt. Napoleon would rout these English, and destroy them as he had routed the armies of Europe in the great days they loved to remember. They expected to hear of him in Brussels to-night, and back in Paris in three days' time. A fateful hope—so swiftly fulfilled.

It had been very wet during the earlier hours of the morning, but the clouds lifted as the day

wore on, and there was even a little gleam of sunshine when the old dame of the farm called them to breakfast at one o'clock. Yvonne was much refreshed by her long sleep, but she had not regained her spirit; and Bernard found it curious beyond understanding that she, who had been first among the enthusiasts during the miseries of yesterday's march, should to-day be not only silent, but, as it would seem, on the brink of indifference at this time of crisis. True, there were moments when the old fire flashed up, and she would ask with quivering lip and flashing eye for the tidings which had come from Ligny; but upon this she would fall again into her listless mood; or if she spoke it would be of her return to Paris and that which must befall her there.

"I must accept the inevitable," she would say; "there are always the Hôtel Feyrolles and Navarren. Women can find a refuge where men find none. The Marquis will tell me where he lay in hiding while Frenchmen died. Oh, yes; I have always recognised that the day might come when my wandering life would end. If the King returns to Paris I shall go to the Hôtel Feyrolles: there is nowhere else. A woman who has no alternative accepts her fate without complaint. I do not think I am different from other women."

Bernard's reply was evasive. Herein he discovered a new experience, that he who had been

counting the hours which should bring him news of Wellington's victory must now play the *rôle* of comforter to this helpless girl, and remind her that the campaign had been so far little better than a triumph for France and its Master. It was plain, however, that she paid little heed to him, and that his words were vain. The dejection of those weary hours when they had ridden through the blinding rain toward an unknown goal lay heavy upon them both; and she no less than he welcomed the brief sunshine. Indeed, they quitted the farm which had sheltered them with a relief which its hospitalities did not justify.

"The road to Charleroi is wisdom; to Brussels folly," he said. "We find our servant at the first, our friends at the second. Tell me what I am to do, Yvonne."

"Let it be to Brussels," she said. "It is something to believe that we may speak of it." And then she asked him, "Cannot you hear the guns again, Bernard? I thought that I heard them while I slept. Yes, I am sure that they are firing over there."

He admitted that it was so. A rumbling thunder of sound upon the far horizon had no longer the distinct meaning of yesterday, but they found it unmistakable, none the less. Perhaps this new message of battle reanimated them both and awakened a curiosity which became greater as

its gratification promised finality. Every league now carried them nearer to that mighty amphitheatre in which the destinies of Europe must be decided, for them and for their children's children. They began to perceive waggons bearing wounded to friendly hamlets—the wounded who had lain through unnameable nights upon the field of Quatre Bras. Stragglers from the battlefield—in some cases, perhaps, deserters—sat beneath sheltering hedges or roved in maddened bands, threatening civilians and breathing murder and debauch. Houses, less fortunate than the farmhouse which harboured them, were full of marauders who shut the doors upon the wounded and left the dying on the high-road. Yet a little farther on and they met a company of green-coated *chasseurs-à-cheval*; and drawing nearer, they discovered their old friend, Colonel Dupontine, at the head of them. Here, verily, they had stumbled upon a human oasis. Three voices together asked for news and gave none. They told him that they had come from Mons; he made it known that he was in charge of a division sent to make a feint upon Wellington's extreme right, and that, the task being done, he returned to Waterloo.

"It will be over before I get there," he said. "Don't talk of Brussels. It is nonsense until the army is settled there. I will take you under my wing, and you shall share my quarters. Yes, all

goes well so far as we have heard anything. Gourgaud has been keeping me informed, and I have just seen an aide-de-camp from De Flahaut. If he can recall Grouchy, there will be no doubt of it. He likes sabreing the Prussians so well that he is out of touch at present. Old Cambronne has been doing splendid things, and Ney fights like a madman. If the Belgians break and fall back upon Brussels, it will be a rout. I admit that the English do better than we expected. Monsieur St. Armand there knows something of them if he has not forgotten it. Now that he has become one of us, I shall make no apology for that; Mademoiselle de Feyrolles will not insist?"

Yvonne smiled at the question, nor did Bernard feel it necessary to betray his own feelings to this comparative stranger. Here in France he chose to let them think that his French origin answered all such questions; but he would have admitted to a friend that his nerves tingled and his heart beat high when he heard the boasts and wondered how far the night would complete them. Nevertheless he was glad of the Colonel's company; and the presence of the considerable force he commanded offered a certain security upon that which could not fail to prove a hazardous day. Side by side with him now, they continued to discuss the battle whose guns they could so plainly hear, and always as those who did not doubt the ultimate issue.

"I am in reserve," said Dupontine, "though we may be wanted for the pursuit. Yonder is the Bois Bossu, where Ney had such a tough job the other day. Look at those poor fellows—we are dreadfully short of surgeons, and I fear there has been much suffering. The night must be very dreadful for both armies. If this day decides it, the Emperor will be lucky. I have always said that a victory would embarrass the Russians, and, of course, Austria does not really want to fight. Please let Mademoiselle be upon your side when we come to the wood. There are things which it is not pleasant to see. France pays a heavy price for independence, but the army does not think of that."

Bernard understood him that they were now approaching the scene of Ney's engagement, and that the sights were not for woman's eyes. Yvonne, however, uttered no word which expressed a woman's pity, nor did she reveal that change which the events of yesterday and to-day had wrought within her—a change expressed by her dejection through the night of vigil, and here again by her silence when the news should have given joy. It may be that a sudden human sympathy, an intolerable pity for these poor fellows whom the rain soaked, and the bullets maimed, and the ghouls of the battle watched in their agony, had come to stifle other emotions and to win her from every cause

but that of the dying and the dead. If it were so, she spake no word of it, but rode with head averted and eyes half-closed, by the wood where the stark forms lay, and over the grass which Frenchmen's blood had dyed. And clear now as a note of doom the guns of Waterloo were calling them. No longer in a deserted land, they began to encounter companies of men, heterogeneous companies whose mingled colours named many regiments, and whose disorder did not speak of victory. And from these a dread word of warning first reached them. "The English were keeping Napoleon back. The Prussians were coming up. Grouchy had not held them. They were devils, those English! Never could the oldest remember such a scene of rage and blood and death. "Better turn back, Colonel," they cried after Dupontine; "it is all up with us if the Prussians come."

Every army has its rearguard of cowards and deserters, and Colonel Dupontine paid no more heed to these men than he would have done to lads of the wayside who might have called a street cry after him. None the less, the dejected mood and hazy accounts of those who warned them could not fail to inspire dejection, and to forbid a brighter prophecy.

It clearly had been a doubtful day. There were none of those omens of victory which would have encouraged them to go on. Veterans, wounded,

and alone, confirmed the stories told by raw and cowardly levies. Old Grouchy, they said, had deserted them. Woods, villages, even the high road echoed that complaint—the woods by the tongues of the lazy poltroons who crowded about the bivouac fires; the villages from the inns where the drunkards rioted; the high road by the shrill cries of maimed horses and the tears and frenzy of honest men who would never be whole again. Here, as the day waned, the misfortunes these poor fellows suffered were realised and understood. A nation's quarrel had hurt them thus, blinding one here, robbing another of the hand which would have earned the children's bread, sending this man to a nameless grave, that to days of pain and long years of regret. They, truly, had no good word of the Emperor's fortunes. "Go back," they said; "it is too late." Dupontine no longer laughed at them.

"I fear it is not as well as we hoped," he said to Bernard; "perhaps it would be wise to take Mademoiselle to Charleroi."

"I will go when the Emperor goes," Yvonne rejoined.

And so they rode on doggedly, [and still the guns of Waterloo were calling them.

CHAPTER XXX.

PURSUIT.

THERE had been no glimmer of sunshine upon the woods of Quatre Bras, nor had the clouds lifted during that long-drawn day of gloom and terror. A great arc of grey mist was bent above an undulating country, and beneath it, when the rain had ceased, great distances were revealed and the green of pastures and the gold of trodden crops. Silhouetted against the monotonous sky, the farm-houses might be numbered to the distance of many miles, while every tree stood revealed in fantastic shape, and even human figures could be perceived upon a far horizon.

The guns of Waterloo were calling them. How clearly the rolling thunder of sounds could now be heard ! Doom, they seemed to say, and upon that, hope ; or, again, they spoke of human agony and the sickle of death. Yonder, where a crest of the featureless land drew a jagged line across the sky ; yonder beneath the vapour of cannon and the glowering heaven of cloud, men were dying

by the thousand about the tattered eagles because the Man had willed it. And his dynasty would go down with the day—even the guns were impotent.

This was a little after the hour of seven o'clock ; the scene some six miles from Mont St. Jean, and the moment one when Napoleon sat with his maps spread before him upon a plain deal table, and his Marshals about him, at the crisis of the day. Before another hour had passed the last supreme attack had been delivered : the Old Guard had broken and fled, the Prussians debouched upon Planchenoit, the day was lost, and the great pursuit began.

It may be that of the three who went so doubtfully upon that wild high road, Yvonne alone carried a brave hope to the end. For the others the omens were too many to permit them to deceive themselves ; and every new voice which spoke from the wayside, every galloping horseman or message of the distant cannon confirmed their gloomiest apprehensions.

“Grouchy has betrayed us. The Old Guard is saving the day. Yes, that new sound of cannon over to the right there, that would be Blucher at Planchenoit. Be wise, messieurs, and go no farther. The reserves are all engaged ; your men will do nothing.” Such was the talk that carried Dupontine and his hussars at a gallop to Waterloo, and left Bernard and Yvonne to their own

resources. Every dictate of prudence forbade them to go farther. They drew aside into a little wood and waited for the cannon to tell the story.

"Dupontine has promised to send a trooper back," he said. "Perhaps we should do better to make for Charleroi. Armador, your Gascon, has friends there, I think. We cannot fare worse than we are likely to do here. And you need rest, Yvonne. I see a great change in you since we left Paris."

"It is nothing to me," she said, with a shrug, and then, almost reproachfully, "You spoke of Brussels this morning, Bernard."

"Because I believed that the road would be open to us, Yvonne"

"And now?"

"I know that it is closed."

"Why do you know it, Bernard?"

"Do not your ears tell you? The guns have ceased."

She listened awesomely a little while, tears standing in her half-closed eyes.

"Yes," she said. "I do not hear them."

"Let us go to Charleroi," he insisted. "It is too late to be curious, Yvonne."

For an instant she did not seem to hear him, but her courage forsaking her when she realised the truth of it, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, my God!" she cried. "Help me to bear this."

So greatly had she loved, so greatly had she hoped, and this was the fruit of love, the reward of hope, this hour of agony by the silent roadside, this sure knowledge that the Folly was at an end, and that its harvest must be humiliation and despair. Helplessly, blinded by her tears, she put out her hand to him and craved his pity.

"Take me to the Emperor," she said. "Be patient with me, Bernard."

"It is impossible," he said. "No man could follow the road. Do you not understand that it is too late?"

Too late! Every murmur upon the still evening air echoed the cry. Distant voices repeated it—long intervals when a snapping twig or a wild bird's note alone broke upon the stillness, speeded that message of doom. All Nature appeared to wait with drawn breath for the human torrent which must break, the human avalanche which must fall. Too late! The Old Guard had broken and fled. The pursuit had begun.

A single horseman, gashed heavily upon the face and rolling in his saddle, rode down toward Quatre Bras as the outpost of his *débâcle*. He was followed at the briefest interval by a troop of *chasseurs-à-cheval*, mad, and drunk with rage and wounds. Scarcely had they passed when men of

all regiments, grenadiers, riflemen, gunners, began to race together, an insane horde flying they knew not whither from the uplifted swords and the pitiless Prussians. Soon the high road became a very river of men. Guns at a gallop, flying hussars, lancers whose lances were flung behind them, horses trampling upon the dying and the dead. Sweat lathered the faces of the men, their eyes protruded, their teeth were set. Look farther afield over the darkening meadows, and you shall see the wings of the flight—a mighty multitude, running, leaping, falling, dying—a countless wave of units rolling on irresistibly over the sodden grain and the ripening orchards. Of all who thus cried for the night to harbour them, none named a haven or sought to direct his steps. The eagles were trampled to the very earth—what mattered it? The day was lost, Napoleon an outcast, France humiliated. Too late for aught but this orgie of panic and despair. They had but a common watchword—"The Prussians! Save yourselves."

As upon an island which has lifted a proud crest above a rapid flood, Bernard and Yvonne witnessed these things from the heart of a wood and were dumb before them. This once proud army, they had acclaimed it in Paris not a week ago, applauding its veterans, admitting the splendour of its equipment and deriding its enemies. To-night its tattered hosts passed them by in

headlong flight; the mad eyes of driven men stared blankly into the gathering darkness; the strong thrust back the weak; gay tunics were but muddy clothes, the proud helmets and shakoes often but shapeless masses in the mud. Who cried "*Vive l'Empereur!*" now? Who had any word for Napoleon but threats and curses? You heard them, it would seem, for hours together as the frantic host passed by; an intolerable, seething volume of men, weeping, raging, flying headlong from the glittering bayonets out towards the grey horizon and the frontier of their country which could not help them. Death, treason—men clenched their hands and said it was that. And some fell with hoarse cries broken upon their lips, and the heavy wheels of waggons stilling their hearts; others dropped from weary horses, and the guns jolted over them, and none would lift a hand to save them. Each for himself, and the great, limitless plain for all, and France but a dim outline over yonder, where the lights of the villages began to twinkle through the haze and the river bridge must claim its holocaust. For this was that dread something of which none had spoken in Paris. Men whispered it as they ran—doom, defeat, flight, death—the woods cast it back at them, the heavens mocked them, the grave yawned before their tortured eyes.

And he who had said, "I go to measure myself

with Wellington"—what had the night for him? A ring of devoted men had dragged him from the field when he had asked to die at the head of his troops. Heroically defended, he, too, rode headlong for the South. And in the famous coach, that coach which had carried him from Paris to Moscow, and was to-night to have entered Brussels in a blaze of triumph, there the English found a peasant girl, and made her their merry prize. So did ironical discovery cast a stone at the bent figure of a nation's glory, and laugh aloud when the metal rang base.

* * * * * *

A full moon rose above the sodden earth and shed her effulgent light upon the rolling plain, where the dead and the dying lay. Pursuit had passed away now—westward, southward; and a chill silence as of Nature after storm settled upon that stricken land. By here and there, in byre or stable, at the village inns or the open doors of churches, the stragglers were found, showing their wounds to hardened eyes and crying in vain for a surgeon's aid. As a sea over the sands of an estuary, so the Prussians, and with them the more daring English, had passed. They neither gave nor asked quarter. Their mission was to kill, and from that no sentiment would call them.

Now Bernard had let the great storm pass by him before he began to think of the wisest course

both for Yvonne and himself; but when darkness had come down and these beacon lights flashed out over the immense plain toward Charleroi, he rode boldly southward with her, and left the rest to chance. From time to time Prussian hussars, sweeping up in the darkness, challenged him roughly; but an English word brought civility, and such a word he spoke sometimes even to his own countrymen. Of these encounters, one he believed to be in the providence of the God who had called him in his exile to this scene of death and had shaped his life so unmistakably since he quitted the Châlet at Grasse. It came when chancing to hear voices in the darkness, he wheeled his horse about, and there in the moonlight found himself face to face with the man whose friends had driven him out of England, and with whose death he had not ceased to charge himself since France had harboured him. Amazed, trembling, he heard the honest words addressed to him. In that instant memory carried him back to London and his home, to days of youth and years of favour—to scenes he had tried to forget and faces that were dear to him:

“St. Armand, by God!”

“Anandale—you?”

“No other. Give me your hand, man. Again—again! I have had Europe hunted for you. Yes, yes; say nothing. The wrong was mine. And that it should be here, to-night! Come with

me, man. Come back to Brussels. I'll hear of nothing else, by——”

Their hands gripped across the saddle, and silently, as Englishmen will, the reconciliation came, there upon that starlit field where the hope of France lay humbled. Little Yvonne hearing them, sat white and silent in the moonlight, and yet she knew that her English friend was glad, and no word of hers would utter a reproach. To-morrow he would leave her and go to this home they spoke of; but to-night he would still befriend her whom all others had forsaken.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE END OF THE STORY.

To return to Brussels, where English words and English joy must be heard, was out of the question; none the less, the message of this English voice was as music in Bernard's ears. Anandale alive—risen from the very dead! Then conspiracy had put this wrong upon his adversary after all: and the lie had been told to drive him from the country. To-day had undone all that. No longer, Bernard said, were the gates of England shut upon him. No longer would they name him an exile. Let a brief spell of waiting pass, and he would take Yvonne to his home, and forget that these days of sorrow had been.

Where else might she turn? What friend had she among those who were even now swarming toward Paris, there to cry, "Long live the King"? The hopes of her young life were crushed and burned. A child of adventure and intrigue, her mission had ended there upon this field of blood. The change that had come upon her was the change

her womanhood dictated—repulsion for these dreadful scenes, pity for the men who died and suffered, a new understanding of ambition, and the price that nations pay for it. No longer had she any protest to make when Bernard carried her far from the place, eastward to a little village, where the voice of war had not been heard. She clung to him as one who might save her from the *débâcle*. Perhaps for the first time she understood how staunch his friendship had been—how uncomplaining and patient.

“We will go to the Châlet,” he said to her upon the evening of the following day, when they walked in a little garden of the inn and a sun of summer shone down upon them both. “It shall be your home, Yvonne, as it has been mine. Yes, the finger of destiny sent you there, and there you promised me fortune. Is there any fortune so great as the gift I claim?”

They had spoken of love rarely in the adventurous days, and now they spoke of it sacredly; not as the passion of an hour, but as some bond in which the misfortunes of their country had united them. Not eloquently, with meaningless words, would he tell her that which his life had told her silently these many days. Nor had she utterance to confess that behind all her acts and deeds of the swift months, there had been the memory of the face which bent over her at the

Châlet, and of the lips which kissed her own in the woods above Grenoble.

Nay, he read the story now in her eyes, and holding both her hands, he claimed her for his own.

“Yvonne,” he said, “there never has been an hour when you were not all to me—Yvonne, my little girl, my wife——”

She had no answer to make to him. France seemed no longer the France of her dreams and hopes. She knew that the gates of her home were closed upon her, and never again would be opened. All had been staked—all lost—in this mad emprise. But a brave man’s love remained to her.

“Take me to England, Bernard,” she said. “I have no longer a country.”

“When the day comes, yes,” he said; “but to-morrow to the Châlet, as you went, Yvonne, a hundred days ago.”

THE END.

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